

# green christian

the magazine



# Valuing the Earth



From left:  
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Clare Redfern,  
Convening Editor  
Simon Court  
and Production Editor  
Suzannah Bracknell

If you're reading *Green Christian* magazine for the first time you might be wondering what this organisation does, who runs it and what's the point? Even if you've been a member for a while, the questions might still resonate! Back in February, the Steering Committee took time out to ponder these matters; Paul Bodenham, our Chair summarizes the conclusions in a special insert in this issue.

One thing we aim to be is a community of encouragement for people who care for the Earth. We have helpful resources: information leaflets for example on sustainable food (the LOAF guide) and *Living Gently on the Earth*. Also on the website are our prayer guide, blog posts, sermons and book reviews. Through workshops, retreats, and local group events (see page 20) there are opportunities to learn, connect and reflect. We seek to foster an active and effective spirituality that finds expression in prayer, public witness and

practical action. The Way of Life meeting described on p11 is one example of this.

Green Christian also initiates projects such as Joy in Enough, which is promoting an alternative to our current, growth-dependent economic system. All these activities are volunteer-led and open to more support and collaboration. Why not come along to the Annual Members Meeting, this November in Sheffield, or our retreat in Suffolk in June (details on back page) to find out more?

The magazine is a place for sharing insights and inspiration from within Green Christian membership and without. In this issue we have a focus on ecology and biodiversity. We continue to examine the Pope's encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, with Edward Echlin looking at parallels between its teaching and the vision of Green Christian. The Pope describes how our consumerist "throw-away culture" is destroying both natural habitats and the livelihoods of

communities round the globe. Richard Solly, who works, with the London Mining Network, to protect the rights of indigenous people from the actions of powerful mining corporations, gives a poignant account of this.

Sir Ghillean Prance, a GC patron, reports back from a recent trip to Amazonia on the urgency of preserving this amazing habitat, a home for innumerable species, also so vital as a carbon sink. Another botanist, our website officer, Judith Allinson recalls both African rainforests and her everyday adventures with plants in the Yorkshire Dales. "The more people appreciate wildlife, the more they will want to save it." she says and provides helpful pointers for doing both.

But how do we value the Earth and all it provides? Nigel Cooper and Hilary Marlow explore this question from very different angles, Nigel in terms of the cost-benefits of "ecosystem services" and Hilary drawing on wisdom found in the Old Testament. Here is advocated an economy based on justice, generosity and praise, as the source of blessing for the Earth and all its inhabitants.

An environmental spirituality finds God in all things; for Christians all created things are united in Christ. Paul Ballard explains how the communion table, or Eucharist, celebrates not only our life in Christ but our relationship with all of Creation, the whole Earth community. In the bread and wine, we bring offerings from "this broken world, calling out with us for healing and renewal", which are broken, blessed and given back to us "as food in the struggle."

As Ed Echlin, echoing the Pope, affirms: "The human family... is capable of what is true, good and beautiful". Green Christian is a community grappling with the difficult truths – of climate chaos, of habitat destruction, the brokenness of our world and our lives, but growing together in Christ to bring healing and hope. Why don't you join us?

African Proverb  
"Those who travel alone, travel fast;  
those who travel together, travel far"

## Letters to the Editor

**Dear Editor,**

Mike Clifford suggests that we should add a fourth R to the three Rs of Reduce Reuse Recycle, namely Repair.

When I occasionally give talks to small groups about being more environmentally friendly, I end with seven Rs, which are, in order of importance:

- Rejoice - in all the good things God has given us for free.
- Refuse - to believe the advertiser's message
- Reduce - the amount of stuff you buy (things you do, places you travel)
- Rent - borrow or share instead of buying new
- Reuse
- Repair
- Recycle - this is a last resort because recycling something still uses a lot of energy.

and again I say, Rejoice!

yours sincerely,  
Louise Cook  
Purley

[And we would like to add another R - Rest (Editors)]

## Green Christian

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

### Editorial Policy

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

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### Basis of Faith

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

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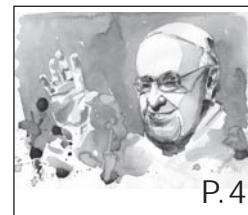


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Our front cover illustration is by Fiona Rich ([cargocollective.com/fionarich](http://cargocollective.com/fionarich)) ©

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# *Laudato Si'*, Ecology and Green Christian

**Edward P. Echlin** explores a “marvellous and unprecedented” papal Encyclical

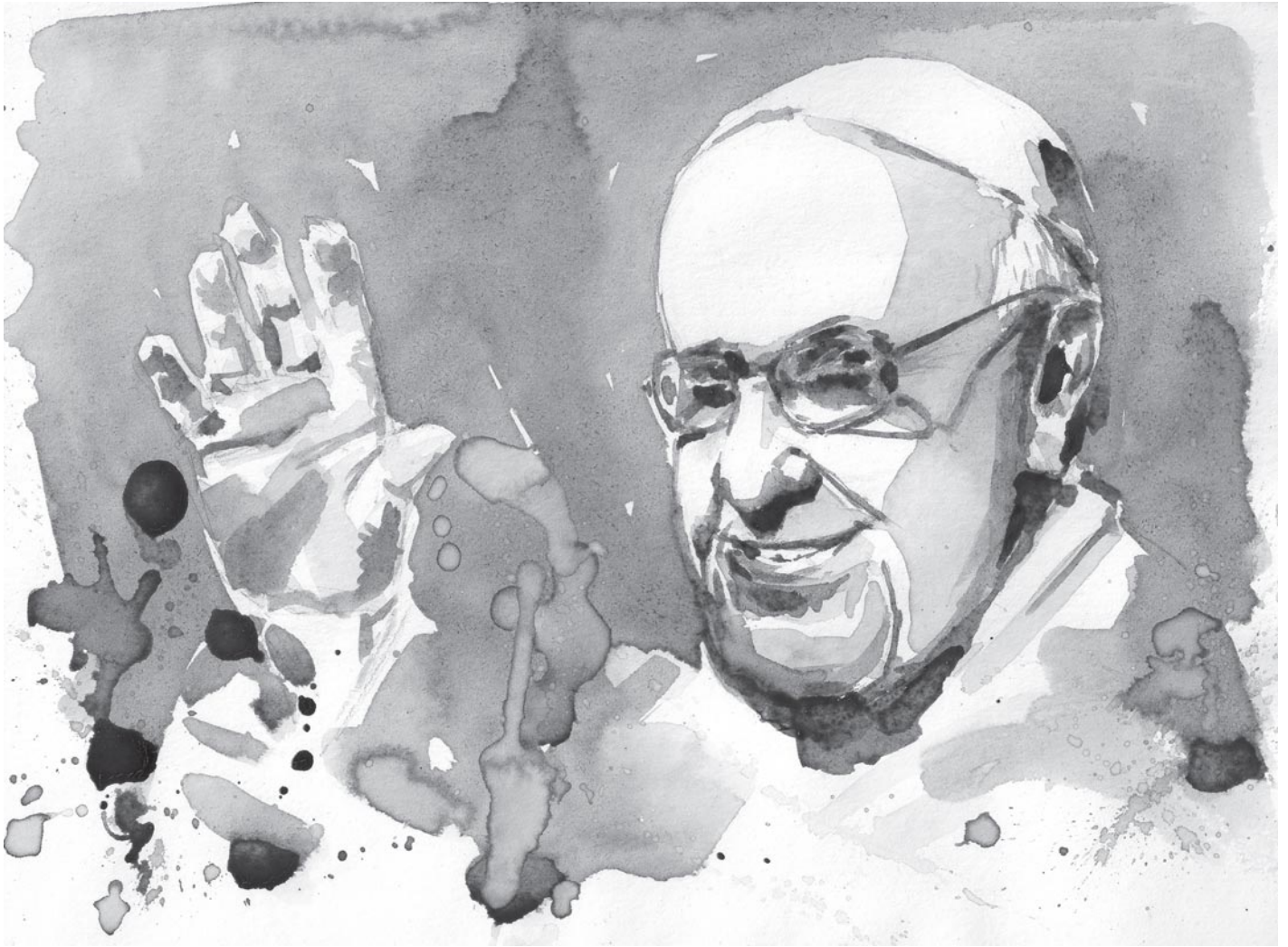


Photo Credit Shutterstock

For those committed to relating their Christian faith to ecology, the papal letter or Encyclical, *Laudato Si'* on “care for our common home” is a major encouragement. The author, formerly Jorge Bergoglio, chose Francis as his papal name in admiration for the medieval apostle to all Earth creatures, Francis of Assisi. The very title of the letter, addressed to everyone, is taken from the opening words of Assisi’s famous prayer for all Earth creatures, “Praise be to you my Lord ....”.

The letter begins with a concise description of what people are doing to “our common home”. The Earth, Francis says, is being abused by an anthropocentric, consumerist “throw-away culture”. He mentions climate as “a common good” damaged by fossil fuels and recommends alternative energies, with special mention of the sun, for which Francis of Assisi thanked God in his prayer. The Pope also notices the importance of the oceans and water throughout the Earth. “Access to safe drinkable water is a basic and universal

human right, since it is essential to human survival and, as such, is a condition for the exercise of other human rights”. The Pope is well aware of the opposition of vested interests, to Earth-supportive groups like Green Christian. Any genuine attempts by groups within society to support “our common home” is viewed as a nuisance based on romantic illusion or an obstacle to be circumvented. We need a “circular module” of living wherein we reuse and return to the Earth rather than dump or destroy.

Francis notes the importance of world religions for care of Earth, our common home. The human person, God's Image, is not to dominate or damage but is responsible for care of the Earth, cherishing each creature as precious in itself. In the older creation story beginning the Bible, people are created in community with the Earth, "to till it and to keep it" (Gn. 2.15). As a universal communion people are related to the glorified humanity of Jesus risen. The Pope praising Teilhard de Chardin, notes Paul's inclusive hymn in Colossians, a favourite of Teilhard (Col. 1.15-20)

"The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all Creation. ...."

*all things* have been created through Him and for Him. ...

and in Him *all things* hold together. ... For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile to Himself *all things*..

In Jesus, God walked the earth, living in harmony with Earth's creatures and worked with them as a craftsman, which is reflected in his remembered words about birds and the mustard bush and fields white for the harvest (Mt. 13.31; Jn. 4.25).

Like members of Green Christian, the Pope confronts the infinite resource illusion whereby people live and act as if our fragile Earth community were infinite, and that technology can solve all problems. The Pope dismisses this familiar anthropocentricism as "the technological paradigm". People and society too are included in "the environment". We need to cultivate a sustainable culture which includes what is small, notably small farms and farmers. He notes the poor quality of many modern cities, with tasteless apartment blocks, lack of green spaces, and excessive cars, roads and carparks.

In the wake of Brexit and political upheaval in the US, the divisions both within nations and across continents are in danger of becoming increasingly bitter and entrenched. The encyclical offers us healthy liberation from a cynical "post-truth" view, calling us to reunite in solidarity and communion for "the common good."

The human family, that is everyone addressed by *Laudato Si'*, is capable of what is true, good and beautiful. The Pope, who remains a "canonical Jesuit" radiates the Jesuit ideal of "finding God in all things" as in the beautiful "Contemplation for Divine Love" concluding *The Spiritual Exercises*.<sup>1</sup> Pope Francis writes, "The universe unfolds in God who fills it completely. Hence there is a mystical meaning to be found in a leaf, in a mountain trail, in a dew drop, in a poor person's face. The ideal is not only to pass from the exterior to the interior to discover the action of God in the soul, but also to discover God in all things". We especially find God in the human Jesus and in the Eucharist – all created things are united in Christ. God the Father's Word or Son, through whom all things were created, unites Himself with the Earth community in the womb of the human woman Mary of Nazareth. God's Holy Spirit is intimately present in all things at the very centre of the universe.

**We need to cultivate a sustainable culture which includes what is small, notably small farms and farmers. He notes the poor quality of many modern cities, with tasteless apartment blocks, lack of green spaces, and excessive cars, roads and carparks.**

Green Christian's inspiring Joy in Enough in liberation from consumerism is similar to Pope Francis' "Less is More". *Laudato Si'* includes a chapter, one of six, on education and spirituality, including children in the environment. Children today grow up in market-driven consumer culture. They deserve an education which teaches sharing, harmony with ourselves, with other people, with the natural world, and with God. The major providers of an inclusive education are the family, society, schools, the media, and religion. The Pope stresses the importance of the family in environmental education relating people to the wider environment, relating young people with the rest of the Earth community and with God as Creator.

An environmental spirituality finds God in all things, especially in our Eucharists which include and give thanks for the whole Earth community. As relational creatures we live in relation with God, with other people, and with the whole Creation.

In a touching conclusion to this marvellous unprecedented document the Pope says its production has been both joyful and troubling. This is a sentiment that members of Green Christians share in their service of the Earth community. The encyclical closes with two prayers, one with all humanity, the other especially with our fellow Christians. Together we pray with and for our fellow Earth creatures who share our common home. We are a community of love.

[1] the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius Loyola, founder of the Jesuits.



Dr Edward Echlin is a Catholic theologian, a Fellow of Leeds Trinity University College and member of Green Christian. He has long been involved in Christian ecology, including authorship of four books and numerous articles and lectures.

# Eucharist and Ecology

**Paul Ballard** invites you to consider the Holy Bread and Wine in a new light



Photo Credit iStock

The distinctive act of Christian worship is the Communion, Eucharist or Lord's Supper. It is here we are drawn into the very heart of the gospel – the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is a commemoration of the Last Supper “on the night in which he was betrayed” (1 Cor. 11.23). It is a fellowship meal where the community gathers with its Lord. It is an act of personal devotion as we receive Christ in bread and wine. It is an anticipation of the heavenly banquet. But rarely, if ever, is it linked with Creation and environmental responsibility. Yet this, too, is central to the Eucharist.

The key moment is at the offertory when the bread and wine, together with the gifts of the people, are brought to the table. Back in the sixties, the then Liturgical Movement made great play of the offertory as the point when the daily life and work of the people were taken

up into the eucharistic action. This seems to have become neglected; but perhaps now is the time to rediscover the offertory and to give it a new twist and deeper meaning.

The Roman Missal (1989) has these words as the elements are taken up:

“Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation, through your goodness we have this

- bread to offer which earth has given and human hands have made.
- wine to offer, fruit of the earth and work of human hands.”

There are two points to be made. First, we are using natural and material things as the tangible sign and vehicle of God's presence. William Temple said of Christianity that it is “the most materialistic of all religions”. Indeed our faith affirms that in Christ, God entered into and graced our material world.

“The Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1.14). So we understand that the stuff of our existence is not only God-given but God-bearing.

This leads onto the second point, for the fruits of the earth are moulded by human hands. We take God's gifts and make of them something that enhances our common life. In Genesis 1.28 there is the blessing of God which endows “dominion” over Creation to humanity. Despite the bad press given to the concept of “dominion” as sanctioning the exploitation of the natural world (pace Lynn White)<sup>1</sup>, there is no avoiding the fact that we do have power and that this is God-given (Psalm 8). Indeed we have increasingly and exponentially been manipulating nature.

There is, however, another side to dominion. It is not just about power but about responsibility. In Adam and Eve, humanity is given the task to exercise something of God's rule. They stand as the visible presence of God. Therefore they (and we) are to exercise God's power in God's way, as those who co-create, caring for and sustaining and bringing peace to the humble and meek, the disadvantaged and downtrodden in every part of Creation. This, too frequently we have failed to do. So we have with all urgency to pray, “your Kingdom come, your will be done, on Earth (at every level) as in Heaven” (Matt. 6.10).

The earlier Creation story posits a garden. The description would have been familiar to the first hearers; a walled garden, cut out of the wilderness, a place to grow crops and house animals used in daily toil. Adam

is the gardener, working the land and bringing it to fruition. When, however, the rhythm is broken everything turns sour. Distrust and competition dominate and life become a battle, even against nature. Yet the bread and wine brought to the altar are from this broken world, calling out with us for healing and renewal. They are accepted, broken and blessed to become once again the tokens of God's "brave new world". We offer a fragment of our world so that it may become a fragment of Eden, drawn into Christ's sacrifice and given back to us as food in the struggle and signs of God's Kingdom, part of the remaking of the Earth.

**We take God's gifts and make of them something that enhances our common life.**

That this is central to Christian worship is confirmed by the fact that in the great prayer of thanksgiving the drama of salvation is rehearsed, starting from its roots in Creation. "From the beginning You have created all things". (Common Worship, Eucharistic prayer G) We are able to join with "the whole company of Heaven" in praising God whose glory "fills both the Heaven and Earth". This is not simply a pre-amble to the commemoration of the commands of Jesus when the bread and wine become for us the body and blood of Christ. It is the context within which this salvation is made possible and which is made concrete, and real, in and through bread and wine.



Paul Ballard, Professor Emeritus in Practical Theology at Cardiff University, is now living in Peterborough. He is active in the Peterborough Eco-faith Network and also in the Green Christian Joy in Enough initiative.

#### References:

1. *The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis* Lynn White Jr (1967)

## COME HOLY SPIRIT

Holy Spirit, bringing order out of chaos,  
Come renew the face of the earth.

Holy Spirit, breathing life into the lifeless,  
Come renew the face of the earth.

Holy Spirit, making strong the weak,  
Come renew the face of the earth.

Holy Spirit, giving talents to your people,  
Come renew the face of the earth.

Holy Spirit, guiding all who venture,  
Come renew the face of the earth.

Holy Spirit, filling all things,  
Come renew the face of the earth.

The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing,  
That you may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.

David Adam in *The Rhythm of Life* (SPCK 2008)

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God of our pilgrimage,  
you have led us to the living water;  
refresh and sustain us  
as we go forward on our journey,  
in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

(from [www.churchofengland.org](http://www.churchofengland.org)  
*New Patterns for Worship*)

# Things Bright and Beautiful

**Judith Allinson**, our GC website officer, is a botanist with a PhD in grassland ecology. She runs wildflower and grass identification courses in Yorkshire at Malham Tarn Field Centre, carries out botanical surveys and teaches in schools. *Green Christian* Magazine asked her about her lifelong interest in plants and wildlife.



## **What sparked your interest in flowers and the natural world?**

My mother encouraged me to learn wildflowers and start a wildflower diary each spring – this would peter out by May but I would take in flowers for “First Finds” competitions held at school. The road in Ripon where I was born rapidly became suburbia, but as a child, it was still possible to go for walks to the countryside from home.

Aged 11, I was a proud member of “Ripon Young Naturalists” run by a boy in the year above me. I don’t remember much: moth trapping, a walk to the gypsum beds by the River Ure – but it felt very grown up. In my teens I remember looking out of the window in a physics lesson and thinking, “Science is OK, but I’d much rather be outdoors.”

## **So you ended up studying science, but still got out of doors?**

Yes, I studied botany at University and then spent two years teaching in Sierra Leone through VSO: sunny weather, sunny people, bright colours, new plants and animals. I encouraged my pupils to bring in wild flowers and attempted a “First Finds” competition. With several different languages being spoken by the girls, and only one simple black and white guide to flora written for neighbouring Ghana, I just had to accept whatever name they told me for the plants. Plants in the tropics are completely different to British ones!

In a long holiday, I travelled by lorry through several countries ending up near the Sahara. In that very dry Sahel region, I could see the plants’ adaptations for saving water. The ecological principles I had learned at school and university were there in front of me!

## **You’re very adventurous - tell me about some other botanical adventures?**

There was not much tropical rainforest to visit in Sierra Leone – much of it has been cut down, though there is lots of secondary forest and “bush”. 13 years later I spent a month in Cameroon visiting botanist friends working in the Korup Forest Reserve on the border with Nigeria. We spent three nights camping in Korup. I am happy to have camped in a habitat that could be 60 million years old. It was fairly easy walking in the forest; because it is dark there is not much growth at ground level but you do need a compass. Each night we heard shooting – poachers were out with lamps, shooting monkeys to sell as bush meat.

## **What fascinates you most about the plants you study?**

Just look under a hand lens at flowers or mosses or lichens, and you will see beautiful shapes and colours. If you go out with a group – a local natural history society or on a field course, then it is much more fun and other people will help you. In these last three years I have been getting to grips



Judith on left showing plants at Malham Tarn Inflow stream and Fen

with lichens. It is very satisfying to be able to give names to some of the colourful patches I see on the trees and walls, and look out for special ones.

**What do you love most about the Yorkshire Dales?**

The views, especially from high up on the hills, and being able to see the stars at night and of course, the wild and natural habitats. As a botanist I am aware which combinations of species are “rare” and “natural” and which are the results of recent interference by humans.

**What changes have you noticed?**

Many years ago I saw a field with beautiful bird’s-eye primroses being drained, probably with subsidies to increase the grass yield. The pink primroses stopped growing there, ryegrass grew instead. Fortunately, that is much less likely to happen now; the Yorkshire Dales National Park and Natural England work to protect the best sites. I saw another wildflower-rich grassy field being ploughed up and planted with a root crop for a year and then reseeded with ryegrass. Now the same fields may be getting

subsidies to make them more “natural” – but the original plants are often lost.

**What can lichens, grasses and mosses tell us about the health of the ecosystem as a whole?**

I could spend many hours answering that question! Lichen changes are the most striking. 30 years ago many tree trunks in cities and the nearby countryside had a greeny grey crustose lichen called *Lecanora conizaeoides*. It grows well in areas of high sulphur dioxide pollution, where other sensitive lichens (such as bushy lichens) cannot grow. Now it is rare and lichenologists get excited when they find it. Sulphur dioxide sensitive bushy lichens are now turning up in cities. On the other hand, each year I notice more and more of a velvety filamentous green alga called *Klebsormidium crenulatum* growing on exposed walls made of acid rocks on the hills, and on some trunks and wooden posts. This alga was not around 30 years ago. It grows well because there is a blanket cover of nitrogen compounds (NO<sub>x</sub> and NH<sub>3</sub>) in the air which acts like a fertilizer, partly from car and

*Continued on page 10*

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industry fumes, but mostly from ammonia in cattle slurry and intensive pig and chicken farms.

### **Does being outdoors deep in nature affect your faith?**

I found being a Christian easier in rural Africa, because all life was closer to nature – and lived more simply. I felt my trip round West Africa was a type of pilgrimage. Here near Settle, I am lucky to be able to go outside for a walk at night, or in daytime climb the steep slope behind my house; it does make me feel good, and closer to God. Psychologists are now showing that just having a view of trees outside a window can make ill patients get better quicker.

### **Tell me something about the 100 Churches Rainforest Fund project you set up?**

This Rainforest Project asks Churches to raise just £100 and send this to an established habitat conservation charity, such as A Rocha Ghana, Cool Earth or World Land Trust (see footnote 2 below). These charities can preserve about one acre of rainforest for each £100 sent. Of course Churches can send more, but even a small contribution is important. Doing this, a Church community might start to reflect about how our actions can make a tangible difference to the world, caring for Creation and our neighbours, now and in the

future, around the world. I grew up thinking that everywhere in England would become suburbia. Only later did I realise that many nature reserves in this country exist because people in the past have worked hard to save them. It is really important for us to work on a worldwide scale now to save reserves for the future.

### **What other steps could each of us take to preserve biodiversity and protect habitats?**

1. **Encourage Church services that** celebrate biodiversity and pray for organisations and people (farmers, lawyers, NGOs, politicians, nature reserve wardens and guards) working to protect it.
2. **Actively support the campaigns of conservation charities** locally, nationally and internationally. Encourage your Church to have a fund-raising event for a habitat conservation charity in Green Christian's 100 Churches Rainforest Fund Project to show that respect for Creation is part of our faith.
3. **Ensure any savings** are ethically invested and not invested in firms contributing to destruction of wildlife.<sup>3</sup>
4. **Buy food** that is "wildlife friendly" and eat less meat and dairy.
5. **Learn to identify** and appreciate **local wildlife** and encourage others in this. Come on a field course! Get outside; investigate the natural world with games in Sunday School or Messy Church. The more people appreciate wildlife, the more they will want to save it.

**I found being a Christian easier in rural Africa, because all life was closer to nature – and lived more simply.**



Judith Allinson is GC website officer. She works at Malham Tarn Field Centre, teaches and does botanical surveys. She is often seen looking for wildflowers, lichens and mosses on pavements and walls.

1. 100 Churches Rainforest project: <http://www.greenchristian.org.uk/100churches/>
2. for more suggestions, see <http://ejfoundation.org/all-campaigns>
3. <https://secure.greenpeace.org.uk/page/content/forest-expose-petition/>

# The Green Christian 'Way of Life Community'

**Chris Walton** on a Creation-centred way of being

The Green Christian Way of Life Community (which is a part of Green Christian) is made up of GC members called "Companions", who have committed themselves to a "Way of Life". This is a commitment to a spirituality centred on immersion in, and care of the Creation, which is held together by the Christ we love and serve (Colossians 1.7). Companions also undertake to share with, and encourage each other along the Way. Thus the Community is about developing and journeying further into Christian Discipleship by becoming increasingly Creation-centred in life and faith, and doing this together with others who are similarly committed.

Companions, and those seeking to hear more about this initiative, gathered in London in January and heard Dr. Martin Poulson, Head of Theology at Heythrop College, University of London speak and sing to us, reflecting on the three concepts in the title: **creation centred, the way** and **being**. He shared deeply and powerfully, drawing on his own journey of faith.

Martin reminded us that the first Christians called themselves followers of The Way; there is a deep connection between this early name and the **Way of Life Community**. This Community, with its four disciplines of prayer, living gently, public witness and encouragement is our way of following Jesus as disciples. The Way is **Creation centred**: as Pope Francis wrote in *Laudato Si'* – "to live life to the full is to be Creation centred: we are creatures of God, in fellowship with all other creatures of God." **Being** is about being together: we are a group of pilgrims journeying together.

Reminding us that to be radical means "being rooted" he shared his own sense

of feeling capable of being innovative and exciting only if he is firmly rooted with a secure feeling of belonging. If we are on The Way together, we belong together rooted in Creation and led by God.

In a moving few moments Martin shared his conviction that the petition in the Lord's prayer: "Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil" is not one but three. "Lead us" is an important petition on its own, asking God to lead us, in a radically Creation-centred way, being together as we learn to live on the Way.

Not only did Martin share with us the necessity of being vulnerable, available to one another as we attempt to follow The Way, but he demonstrated that way of being in the way he spoke, sharing openly his own journey and by gently asking questions of us which provided us with much animated sharing in the later sessions of the day.

He ended his talk with the singing of one of his own songs, *At the turning of the tide*.

Inspired and energised by Martin the rest of the day flowed on, with a beautiful meditation led by Deirdre Munro, lunch together and a session for Companions. This focussed on ensuring that, despite being a dispersed Community, all Way of Life Companions have at least one other "on the Way" who is available for sharing and encouragement. In Martin's words: "to free us for being light-hearted as a part of our walking lightly on the earth. It's a life lived more fully, shaped by acknowledging who we are at a deep level, creatures of God in fellowship with all Creation's creatures."

(For more information on the Green Christian Way of Life Community please contact [georgedow51@btinternet.com](mailto:georgedow51@btinternet.com) or see [www.greenchristian.org.uk/way/](http://www.greenchristian.org.uk/way/))



At the turning of the tide,  
when in and out collide  
and it seems like nothing's happening at all.  
At the turning of the tide,  
we're standing side by side,  
could the barriers between us start to fall?

Oh, I hope so,  
'cause we've waited for so long,  
could a brighter future start today?  
And I believe so,  
if we say the time has come  
and we stand together,  
at the turning of the tide.

At the breaking of the day,  
when fear gets in the way,  
it's so hard to tell your brother from your foe.  
At the breaking of the day,  
as the darkness melts away,  
could a clearer horizon begin to show?

Oh, I hope so,  
'cause we've waited for so long,  
could a brighter future start today?  
And I believe so,  
if we say the time has come  
and we open up our eyes,  
at the breaking of the day.

At the parting of the ways,  
if we can't penetrate the haze,  
we're bound to make mistakes we've made before.  
Or could the parting of the ways  
be the start of better days,  
could our future open up to something more?

Oh, I hope so,  
'cause we've waited for so long,  
could a brighter future start today?  
And I believe so,  
if we say the time has come  
and we take the road less travelled,  
at the parting of the ways.

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Chris Walton, former editor of this magazine, is Chaplain to Green Christian and Chair of the Ringsfield Hall Trust.

# Drought, Dams and Mangroves

**Ghillean Prance** reports on progress and challenges from the Amazon rainforest



Deforestation due to logging in Pará, Brazil

photo credit\_wcfm.org

In August last year, I visited Brazil to do some research on mangroves and came back with both good news and bad. Amazonia is really a battlefield between those that want to destroy and develop at all costs and those who want to conserve and sustainably-use the forest. My visit was to the state of Pará, the state with the highest rate of rainforest destruction at present. Flying over this eastern part of Amazonia reveals the extent of deforestation there.

## Deforestation

Deforestation in eastern Amazonia, that receives its rainfall coming off the Atlantic Ocean, is interrupting the circulation of water westwards over the region. This is causing the droughts further south in Brazil and Argentina because of the absence of the “flying rivers” that send rain-laden clouds down to the south of Brazil. Massive volumes of vapour rise from the evapo-transpiration of the Amazon trees and it

flows gradually west until blocked by the Andes and is then diverted towards the southern agricultural areas. Drought is becoming a serious problem in Brazil.

The good news is that the overall rate of deforestation has slowed down dramatically and in 2015 was about 75% below the average for 1996 to 2005. This is the reason that Brazil has been able to greatly reduce its net greenhouse gas emissions in accordance with pledges towards an 80% reduction by 2020. Deforestation has been reduced through good satellite surveillance, better control of the illegal actions of farmers and land speculators, and the establishment of more protected areas, but it is still a concern especially during the current political uncertainty in Brazil.

In contradiction to the overall trend, data from IMAZON (Instituto do Meio

Ambiente e Homem da Amazonia) show that deforestation in June 2016 was the highest in any month since November 2007, being an area of 972 km<sup>2</sup>. which is double that of June 2015. This is alarming as 2016 has been a dry year which encourages more deforestation and burning; I saw TV images whilst there, showing the city of Rio Branco, in Acre State, completely shrouded in smoke from the burning forest.

Another area of particular concern is the Amazon part of Peru which is a rich hotspot for biodiversity of plants and animals. Recent reports from there have shown the impact of oil mining and the frequent spills from the pipeline across the Andes from the Amazon region to the Pacific coast. The latest threat there is the expansion of oil palm growing in lowland rainforest areas, something that has already destroyed much of the rainforest areas of western Ecuador. Peru is rapidly becoming the place of concern for those monitoring rainforest destruction: forest loss in 2014 in Peru was 1775 km<sup>2</sup>, and in 2015 over 1886 km<sup>2</sup>.

## Dams

Deforestation has drawn much attention from the media over the years, but one of the greatest threats in Amazonia is the number of hydroelectric dams that are being built. There are 191 existing dams in Amazonia and the total planned at present is 246. Hydroelectric is good clean energy that does not use fossil fuels, but better consideration is needed of where to locate dams. The environmental impact studies for the location of some Amazon dams is minimal. Over the past 40 years considerable progress has been made in Brazil with the licensing system to

evaluate and mitigate the impacts of development projects. However, the most recent threat is a proposed one-sentence constitutional amendment that would revoke this, allowing the mere submission of an environmental impact assessment to permit any project to go forward unchecked – a frightening prospect for the Amazon ecosystem.

The dams that flood rainforest are not as green as claimed because the reservoirs flood the forest and submerge the trees and soil; this causes the release of huge quantities of the greenhouse gas methane, and furthermore can kill the trees. I have observed masses of dead trees standing in areas flooded by the Balbina Dam, north of Manaus in central Amazonia.

Much of the energy produced by the Amazon dams is to power the international mining industry rather than the domestic market. However, while I was in Brazil some good news was announced: the suspension of the São Luiz Dam in the mighty Tapajós River. This was largely due to the actions of the Mundurucu peoples whose territory would have been most affected by the dam.

Dams are a particular threat to river dolphins, turtles, giant otters and fish as well as to the indigenous peoples. They also damage floodplain vegetation that is controlled by the annual flood pulse system and block the important flow of nutrients from the Andes to the lowlands. There is no doubt that dams are putting some of the region's biodiversity at risk.

**Mangroves**

I was in Pará to look at mangrove forests, including the red mangrove with its arching mass of prop roots that anchor the trees to the soil against the pressures of the rising and falling tides and stormy seas. Mangroves, which naturally occur around tropical coastlines, contribute an important environmental service, preventing erosion of the coastline and protecting against storms. The effects of many typhoons and tsunamis would have been far less in tropical Asia if they had not cut down their mangrove forests.

Mangroves are full of crabs and fish and so provide food and income for many people. I visited some intact mangroves that were teaming with small crabs, but nearby locals were complaining because much had also been felled to provide

**Dams are a particular threat to river dolphins, turtles, giant otters and fish as well as to the indigenous peoples.**

firewood and fuel to a factory and replaced by rice plantations.

One of the striking things I noticed in the towns and villages of Brazil on this trip was the enormous growth of the Pentecostal Church. Membership is increasing and some huge and extravagant church buildings are springing up. They are enthusiastic about conversion, but many of them preach a prosperity gospel message, rather than the true gospel of love and care for Creation. A challenge for the Church of today is to work with these people to convert their enthusiasm into care for Creation and each other, rather than the desire for wealth.

**Amazonia and weather regulation**

Brazil is a country of contrasts. The last decade has seen great progress in curbing deforestation in Brazil, but the tendency of the current government has been to encourage investments in ports, mining and hydroelectric dams. Even if this is controlled better, the impact of worldwide climate change is a threat to the Amazon forest. Probably the most important current concern is the role of the Amazon forest in its ability to regulate weather systems. Climate scientists such as Brazil's Antonio Nobre, are warning that the "vegetation-climate equilibrium is teetering on the brink of the abyss." Part of this change is caused locally by deforestation, but this is associated with how the whole world acts and so we, as stewards of Creation, should be seeking to curb climate change wherever we are.

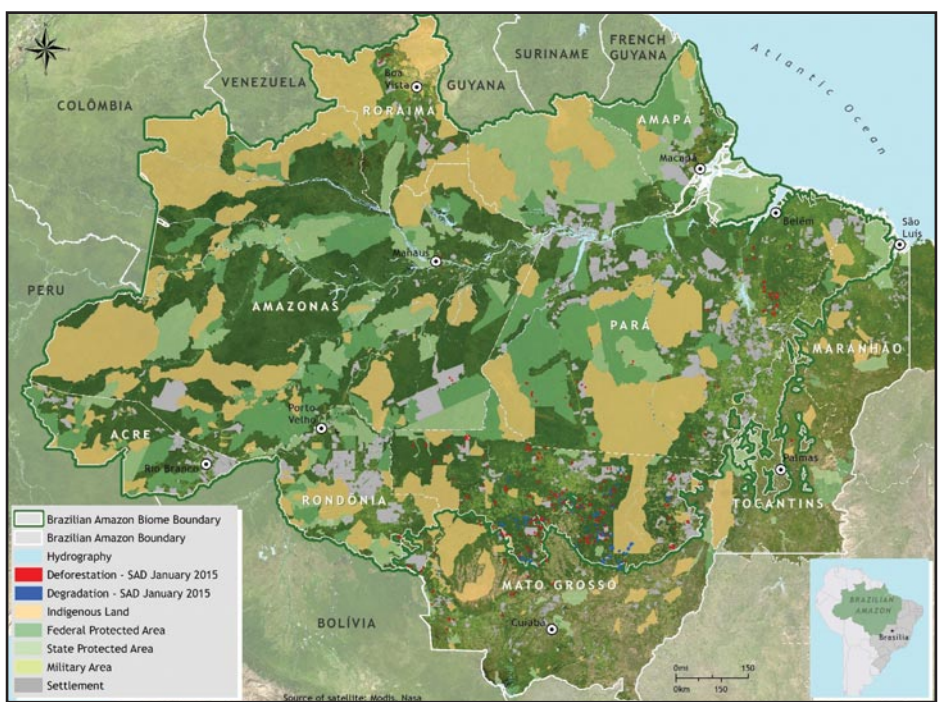


photo credit Nasa



Sir Ghilleen Prance, a Green Christian patron, is a former director of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.

# Should we put a price on nature?

**Nigel Cooper** explores the methods which allow us to put an economic value on nature – and the reasons why we should hesitate before we do so



Photo Credit Shutterstock

It was 10 years after the publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* when I went up to university to study biology. The talk was full of hope that a renewed awareness of the damage people were doing to the Earth would lead to the necessary steps to protect it. Now over 50 years later, the hope that a call to protect nature would work has drained away. We know instead that the world is suffering escalating damage. What is to be done?

Up steps economics: if you can't beat 'em, join 'em. Many of the most powerful forces of destruction are economic ones: desires of companies to make profits and of governments to increase GDP. If environmentalists learned to talk the talk, perhaps then they would have powerful arguments that would lead to real change. And, praise be, there are concepts to hand in economics we can use, especially the concept of "externalities". Simple really: normal economics does not include nature in its calculations, so nature needs to be brought inside the equations used by economists.

Environmental/Ecological/Green Economics (these have different emphases, but all three challenge Mainstream Economics) have been growing in importance for over 30 years and are now a veritable "industry". Major reports have been published by the UN<sup>1</sup>, the EU<sup>2</sup> and the UK<sup>3</sup>.

## How is it done?

As in a charity's account, there is both a balance-sheet approach (asking "what is the natural capital?") and an income-and-expenditure approach (asking "what is the income – or benefits – nature provides?"). The UK's National Ecosystem Assessment, (which is the one I have been involved with in a small way) takes the second approach as follows.

Ecosystems (here meaning nature thought of scientifically and as apart from humans) do various things, some of which provide goods or services to humans, which are of benefit to us and so become part of the economy. A straightforward

**Appealing to economic arguments alone just strengthens the tendency in our society to make decisions on self-interest alone. But there are also several conceptual difficulties with the economic valuation of nature.**

example is that an agricultural ecosystem grows crop plants, these provide food, which we like to eat and so are prepared to buy. This is an example of a provisioning ecosystem service. A regulating ecosystem service might be flood alleviation, in that, when it rains heavily, the rainwater is partially absorbed by the soil, particularly if it is forested, and so only slowly released into rivers, which reduces peak water levels in floods.

And this is where it becomes interesting, because currently no one “buys” flood alleviation in a supermarket. But if we start putting a price on this, perhaps by estimating the cost of repairing flood damage if it was not naturally alleviated, or by estimating the cost of constructing hard flood defences instead of relying on these ecosystem processes, we can then put that price into equations. Thus, the economic benefit of food from tilled fields can be set against the economic price of retaining woodland to alleviate flooding. This economic calculation is often used in one of two ways: a cost-benefit-analysis by a regulatory body may lead to new rules preventing further loss of woodland, or payments-for-ecosystem-services may be made to farmers if they planted trees on some of their fields.

We can put all these figures together in a Total Economic Value (TEV) of all the services an ecosystem provides. A TEV should include cultural ecosystem services, such as recreational or educational use, and even non-use values, such as existence value i.e. the value I place on something continuing to exist, even when I don’t interact with it in any way. For example, I can value polar bears even though I never expect to see them in the Arctic. It is much harder to derive an objective value for these and normally one has to go out and just ask people, “How much are you willing to pay to protect X?” The interpretation of the answers people give is not straightforward. Still, it is done sometimes, and the figures are added to the mix to come up with a TEV to put into

the analysis to determine what a particular decision should be, e.g. whether or not to fell a wood for housing<sup>4</sup>.

**Does this leave you feeling uncomfortable?**

It does me! I can accept the political value of this type of argument in certain circumstances – though I think it is less useful than many enthusiasts claim. But I believe such an argument should be accompanied by a health warning and a supplementary moral argument. Appealing to economic arguments alone just strengthens the tendency in our society to make decisions on self-interest alone. But there are also several conceptual difficulties with the economic valuation of nature.

For example, it does not question the current distribution of wealth and power. For example, people give very different answers to the two questions: “How much are you willing to pay to protect X?” (which assumes the developer owns X), and “How much would you have to be paid to allow the loss of X?” (assuming X is publicly owned). Ownership brings confidence and power. The answer to the first question is also very sensitive to how much disposable income the respondent could spend on protecting X.

Many people believe that the natural world has an intrinsic value in itself and is not merely valuable for what it can do for humans. Economists argue that this is incorporated into the TEV through existence value. Yet many respondents to surveys refuse to give an existence value as, for them, intrinsic value cannot be priced, in a similar way to the way marital fidelity is beyond price.

Most profoundly, for Christians and others, nature is not there merely for human benefit. We know we have a duty to cherish the Creation that God has placed us among, as one of God’s creatures. Economic analysis can only incorporate benefits to humans, weighing up the consequences to those benefits of various courses of action. Instead, as Genesis 2.15 expresses it (as translated by Hilary Marlow<sup>5</sup>), we are under instruction, “to serve and preserve” the Earth that is our life-world.



Nigel Cooper is University Chaplain at Anglia Ruskin University, as well as researcher at the Global Sustainability Institute, Cambridge. He contributed to the Shared Values Research of the National Ecosystem Assessment <http://www.sharedvaluesresearch.org>

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# Mining, injustice, destruction – and our response

**Richard Solly** explains the social, ecological, and theological reasons why he cares about mining



Photo credit Richard Solly

There are two roots to my work at London Mining Network.

One is my involvement with Indigenous Communities in the US and Canada. This began over 30 years ago on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation in Montana, where I imbibed something of the spirituality of a people who had lived close to the Earth, showed respect for all living beings, and venerated the Creator of all things. In the person of a local “medicine man”, Joe Fox Senior, I experienced a merging of the traditions of the Northern Cheyenne people and the Christian faith. Joe led sacred Cheyenne ceremonies, and he never missed Mass on Sundays and holy days.

Later in Alberta, I worked with Church organisations in solidarity with Indigenous Communities under threat.

This involved defending Native land rights against logging and oil corporations. Huge swathes of forest land in northern Alberta were being handed over to extractive companies; water was polluted by drilling wastes, air by flaring. Enormous expanses of forested land were being clear-cut. Indigenous people were losing livelihoods as the animals that they relied on for food and fur were driven away. The final, poisonous flowering of this destructive model of economic development was the tar sands project, which has laid waste an area of forest

the size of England and replaced life-giving ecosystems with hundreds of square miles of toxic wastes.

When I returned to England, I wanted to remain in solidarity with North American Indigenous Peoples, and I came across a small group called the Minewatch Collective, which assists Indigenous Peoples with their struggles for justice from massive mining companies. I learnt that mining is at least as destructive as other extractive industries, leaving a legacy of pollution that in some cases will last for thousands of years. This is a result of radioactive wastes, or acid mine drainage which is caused when sulphide ores are exposed to air and water.

I also learnt that London is one of the two main centres (the other being Toronto) for raising money for mining projects around the world – partly because many of the world's largest multinational mining companies are listed on the London Stock Exchange. Because of that, most working people in Britain have investments in those companies through their banks, insurance companies or pension funds, usually without knowing it. We are unwittingly involved in the injustice and environmental destruction that these companies cause.

It became clear that we needed to find ways of pressuring these companies to clean up their act.

The other root of my work is in Colombia.

In 2000, I was asked to visit La Guajira, the most northerly province of that country, to witness the impacts of the vast Cerrejon opencast coal mine. The mining concession covers 690 square kilometres, and numerous farming villages had already been evicted to make way for it. Others were close to the expanding pits and faced imminent eviction. One of them was the village of Tabaco, a community of African descent. It was a beautiful place, full of big trees, with a clear, rushing river running by, and brightly painted houses each with their fruit trees and small livestock. Around the village was common pasture where people ran cattle. Accepting that the village was to be swallowed up by the mine, the villagers just wanted to be moved as a whole community to some other fertile site where they could continue small-scale farming.

At the time of my visit, the mine was owned 50/50 by the Colombian government and a subsidiary of US oil company Exxon called Intercor, which operates the mine. Just after I left, the government's share was bought up by two companies, listed on the London Stock Exchange – Anglo American and BHP Billiton – together with a private Swiss company, Glencore, which subsequently listed in London.



Evicted residents of Tabaco by the ruins of their house

When I visited next, in October 2001, the village lay in ruins. In August that year, company bulldozers had turned up, accompanied by hundreds of armed police and security guards, and evicted the unarmed villagers by force. There was no alternative site for the villagers to go. They were scattered to wherever they could find a place to stay.

The destruction of the village was completed in early 2002. Immediately afterwards, Anglo American, BHP Billiton and Glencore bought up Intercor's 50% share of Cerrejon Coal and took over the operation of the mine. The timing of this gross injustice was clearly deliberate. When we approached the London-linked companies, they said that the eviction was nothing to do with them, as they had not had operational control when it took place. When colleagues in the USA called on Exxon to put it right, the company said it had nothing to do with them, as they no longer owned any part of the mine.

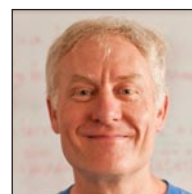
Realising that the struggle for justice against such enormously powerful companies would require a concerted effort, several campaign groups working with communities across the globe, from Columbia to the Philippines and Indonesia, formed an alliance. It included Partizans, which was working against another huge mining company, Rio Tinto, former members of the Minewatch Collective and other groups that were concerned about the impacts of London-based mining companies. The London Mining Network was born.

We now have 30 groups involved, all very varied. Our point of unity is the right of land-based communities to control what goes on in their territory. We bring community leaders and activists to the

AGMs of London-based mining companies so they can make their demands clear to boards and shareholders. We arrange public meetings for them and meetings with parliamentarians, government officials, institutional investors and journalists. When we can't bring community representatives to company AGMs, we convey their views to the meeting and demand justice. And we hold demonstrations, contribute to government consultations, brief MPs and publish information about the damaging impacts of British mining investment around the world.

We are a secular organisation, but several member groups are Church organisations and my own motivation is my faith; that is the taproot feeding the other roots of my work. In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis confirms my own experience when he says (in section 49), "we have to realize that a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear *both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.*" He speaks movingly of the dignity and rights of small-scale farmers and Indigenous Peoples, and singles out mining as one of the threats that they face.

When I went to Colombia, one thing that struck me forcibly was the scale of the destruction of the land – all in pursuit of a mineral, the burning of which makes such a massive contribution to climate change. But the other thing that I cannot forget is the wounded dignity of the Indigenous and farming communities thrown off their land in the name of progress. Each one is my brother or sister in Christ, each one made in the image of God. How can I forget them or refuse my solidarity? I can't – and that's why I helped set up London Mining Network, and why we'll carry on our work until we've achieved justice.



Richard Solly is Co-ordinator of the London Mining Network, <http://londonminingnetwork.org>

# The Earth Our Home: valuing the world's resources

**Hilary Marlow** takes a Biblical view of the earth's value



Photo Credit iStock

We live on a very small planet orbiting an insignificant star at the edge of a minor galaxy. Our sun is one of an estimated 100 billion stars (100,000,000,000) in our galaxy, the Milky Way, among over 100 billion galaxies in the universe. Amazing! But what has this to do with ecology? My point is that this small planet, this Earth, is our home, our only home. We are utterly dependent on its resources to survive: water, air, plants, minerals. Countless other life species, share this home with us, from elephants to bacteria, whales to amoeba, and together form a richly diverse and highly complex set of ecological systems. But we are pushing the planet to its very limits and beyond. Of all creatures, we are capable of creating the most havoc and causing irreversible damage to habitats and systems including those far beyond our own doorstep.

## Valuing our home

Did you know that the words economics and ecology share the same Greek root: *oikos*, which means 'home' or 'household'? Both are concerned with the way that our home, planet Earth, functions. We might therefore expect economics to have a positive relationship with ecology or at least to be consistent with it. In practice, in the modern world economic concerns and decisions often take precedence over ecological ones.

You can see this most clearly in the way governments and policy makers approach environmental issues. The trend in

recent years is to decide priorities in environmental action based solely on the natural world's capacity to meet human need for goods and services.<sup>1</sup> But should the natural world be reduced to a series of financial calculations? Does the world exist merely to provide a home for human beings, and the resources necessary for our survival? Is this a biblical perspective and if not, on what basis does the Earth have value?

Here are six ways in which the Bible, especially the Old Testament, helps us think about the Earth and its value.

## 1. The physical Earth is God's creation

Regardless of its usefulness to human beings, the Earth has value because it is created and owned by God (Ps 24:1). At the end of Genesis 1 we read God's verdict on his own handiwork: "God saw everything that he has made and indeed, it was very good." (Gen 1:31; "good" here means fit for purpose rather than morally perfect). The Old Testament poets regarded the physical Creation as an expression of God's wisdom (e.g. Ps 104:24, Jer 10:12). Our belief in a Creator God says nothing about the processes by which life came into being and is entirely compatible with the theory of evolution. But it does mean treading lightly lest we destroy or damage this precious Creation.

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1. For more details see: *Millennium Ecosystem Assessment* (MEA, 2005) and *The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity* (TEEB, 2009).

## 2. Biological diversity is celebrated

The authors of the Old Testament are interested in classifying and describing the species of wildlife that they encounter. You only have to read the description of the animals entering Noah's ark or the lists of clean and unclean foods in Leviticus (a bit more challenging!) to realise how closely they observe differences in behaviour and physiology. King Solomon is famously known for his wisdom, but did you know that this included his ability to catalogue plants and animals (1 Kings 4:33)? Psalm 104 is another great description of biological diversity, which accepts the reality of predation (v. 21) as well as acknowledging God as the giver of all life (vv.27-30). Likewise Job 39-40 celebrates the lifecycles, habitats and behaviour of various species, from the mountain goat to the hippopotamus. These and countless other species exist in all their diversity because of God's creativity, not just as resources for human beings to use at will.

## 3. The whole Creation has purpose

Psalm 19 tells us that "The heavens proclaim the glory of God" (v.1) and if you've ever gazed at the stars on a cloudless night, you'll probably agree. God's Creation reveals to us something of His majesty and glory. So the natural world is far more than just the backdrop to human society; it has a real purpose and reflects both God's[1] power and His care. The psalmists acknowledge this by calling the whole of Creation, animate and inanimate, to worship God. For example, in Psalm 148 mountains and winds, birds and animals, women and men, are all commanded to "Praise the name of the Lord" (Ps 148:13). This mandate is something we share with the rest of Creation, not something that separates us from it. By destroying species and habitats we are limiting the Earth's ability to fulfil its God-given purpose and silencing its voice of praise.

## 4. The Earth responds to God

The prophets of the Old Testament regarded the Earth as playing its part in the story of God's judgement and redemption of Israel. Birds and animals are held up as good examples of how to follow God's ways (Isa 1:3, Jer 8:7). The Earth responds to God by its joyful worship but also by its sorrow at the sin of God's people. For example, Hosea 4 chastises the people for neglecting God's ways (v.1), and lists the consequences this will have in society: increasing crime and bloodshed (v.2). Because of this, says the prophet, the land will mourn and its animals, fish and birds will perish (v.3). In Hosea, as in many other parts of the Old Testament, the Earth acts as a barometer of the relationship between God and society, and still does so today. The promised reversal of this desolation is the hope of God's coming salvation, which will be ushered in by an exuberant celebration of Earth's fertility and flourishing (e.g. Isa 35:1-2, 45:8).

## 5. Sabbath includes the Earth

In Genesis the culmination of God's Creation is the institution of the Sabbath (Gen 2:2-3) and the Israelites are reminded of this in the Ten Commandments in Exodus (20:8-11). The more detailed Sabbath laws in Leviticus stipulate setting the seventh year aside as "a sabbath of complete rest for the land, a sabbath for the Lord" (Lev 25:4). The land is to be protected from exploitation in its task of providing food, and wild animals, as well as domestic ones, are to eat what grows spontaneously in the Sabbath year (v.7). The counterbalance to this ideal picture comes in a graphic warning in the next chapter (Leviticus 26). Only when the Israelites are driven from the land will it be able to enjoy its Sabbath rests, suggesting that they have been careless and destructive in their land use. (Lev 26:34-35). God's inclusion of the land in His Sabbath instructions calls us to reconsider how we value the soil, and how we include rest for the land in our gardening and agriculture.

**These and countless other species exist in all their diversity because of God's creativity, not just as resources for human beings to use at will.**

## 6. The Earth and justice

In the economic marketplace of the 20th century, land has become nothing more than a commodity that can be sold if the price is right. But so often "land-grab" practices damage local communities or force people into unsustainable living conditions. The Old Testament also speaks out against such exploitation and abuse; in Isaiah (5:5-10) and Micah (6:8-15), land-grabbing and oppression of the marginalised renders the land unfruitful for its wealthy new owners.

These prophets see close connections between the economic structures in society and the fruitfulness of the land; acting with justice includes valuing the Earth as well as its human inhabitants, rather than pushing it to its limits.



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# Flying Onwards

**Isobel Murdoch** presents the latest news from local groups as we journey together on the path of faith



Photo Credit iStock

**Sometimes at dawn or dusk, in autumn and again in spring, I hear faint, regular bird calls in the half-light, and run to the window to see a long skein of migratory geese flying overhead. As I write this they will be nearing the end of their winter months here, preparing for the long flight northwards.**

**B**ut there's far more to their migration than this. Without those V-formations, there would be no migration – for in formation geese can fly 70 times further than they could alone. They literally uplift each other as they fly, reducing wind resistance and making it easier to maintain altitude.

And as the geese depend on flying in formation, so we all depend on each other as we seek to follow the path of faith, and as we seek to link faith and ecology. Green Christian's local groups and contacts perhaps most embody this need for community, in very different settings.

Together, they try to build awareness, in different ways at different times. The churchyard of All Saints' Church in **Clifton** in Bedfordshire is still maintained for wildlife, a strong witness in the village. **St Ives** (Cambridgeshire) GC

group toured the local recycling plant, highlighting the need to recycle. **Lincoln's** local contact has spoken to the city's U3A on climate change, and to a secondary school at assembly and during RE and geography classes. In March **Hereford** GC group heard a talk by John Daniels on Joy in Enough, GC's own economics initiative. **Bristol's** group leader held a LOAF meal with a local Christian missional community. Now he is planning to concentrate on publicising the Eco Church award with local Churches – something **Norwich's** Diocesan Environment Group promotes on Facebook.

**Clun's** group screened three films early in the year. One of these was the 2011 Emmy award-winning film *The Next Frontier: Engineering the Golden Age of Green*, which looks at technology's solutions to energy needs. In June there will be another Green Weekend there, an

annual event – this year entitled God's Good Earth, and taking soil as the theme, with proceeds to be donated to the Soil Association.

Two groups have planned conferences this Spring. **Shrewsbury's** conference will have the theme of fossil fuel divestment, with talks by James Buchanan, who runs Operation Noah's Bright Now campaign. The event will look at the campaign and call on Churches to make their investments work for a "brighter, cleaner future". Lincoln will follow last year's conference with another on 13 May, with the main talk this time by Bishop Graham Cray, who is active in the anti-fracking campaign at Kirby Misperton.

Local groups sometimes work in unison with other organisations, from CWM (Christians in World Mission, who have sent an intern for six months to the URC

## LOCAL GROUPS

Church in **St Ives**) and the ACT community (in which the Lincoln contacts take part) to Christian Concern for One World (**Reading's** group contact is assisting with a course developed by CCOW).

Here I want to expand more on two particularly striking stories.

One is taking place in **Leighton Buzzard**, where in recent months the GC group has worked with the local Friends of the Earth branch to launch Low Carbon Leighton and Linslade. There has been a film screening of *This Changes Everything*, followed by Q and A's with journalist Ellen Teague, and climate and renewables experts. Also arranged were two other public meetings, with talks on climate and energy, from the different perspectives of the RSPB and the Department for Energy and Climate Change. Subgroups of Low Carbon Leighton and Linslade will now be formed to look at different ideas – on waste, recycling, food, and the exciting possibility of a community energy initiative. Working with Friends of the Earth has proved a very positive experience, as each group has particular strengths and local links.

The other has seen **Shrewsbury's** group become active in the Shrewsbury Food Hub. In the Hub's first nine months, some nine tonnes of food were distributed to 32 community groups, from school clubs to the local hospice (which has seen its food bill fall by 10%). Without the Hub, all this food – enough to provide 21,000 meals, and with fruit and vegetables 40% of the total – would have gone to waste from local supermarkets. The Hub also worked with another organisation, Shropshire Loves, to send food to Syria, and will do so again soon. An inspiring move away from the throwaway culture, while also helping local charities and organisations.

Some groups also work with local dioceses, as in **Norwich**, where the environment group will contribute to a diocesan conference. **Wychling**, a Kent

village in a benefice of seven Churches where a GC group has just opened, will be hosting an Eco Forum for their diocese in June. Three GC members from **Reading** joined a diocesan exchange on an environment theme to Vaxjo, thought to be the greenest city in Sweden.

Together, GC groups also campaign. **Milton Keynes** held a letter-writing evening earlier in the year, sending campaign postcards and writing to local MPs and councillors.

And, wherever and whenever, they can pray. **Cheltenham** GC marked Peace Sunday with a prayer vigil in the Lady Chapel of St Gregory's Church – the theme named by Pope Francis this year was "Non-violence: a style of politics for peace". **St Ives** held a quiet day at Fox Earth, the nature reserve A Rocha has opened on the Cambridgeshire-Essex border. And **Wychling** has a link to GC's monthly prayer diary on their Church website – a great way to promote prayer for Creation.

That need to work in unison – which I see as the geese migrate – is mirrored by each group, whether large or small. Again and again, the Bible calls for unity: the early Church paints the most striking picture of community in action. The Church now may seem very different, but is still a microcosm of community – as is Green Christian. Groups sometimes comment on GC's strong feeling of community, something I see as integral to the part GC plays.

Would you like to add to all this, by trying to open a group, or acting as a local contact? Or would you like to know more about a group close to where you live?



**Isobel Murdoch**

Isobel.murdoch@greenchristian.org.uk  
01790 763603

## Join Now

If you wish to become a member of Green Christian (formerly known as Christian Ecology Link) or subscribe to *Green Christian the magazine only*, please fill in this form and send with your remittance to: Green Christian Membership, Richard and Nicky Kierton, Flat 1, 31 St James Terrace, Buxton SK17 6HS

To join online, visit [www.greenchristian.org.uk](http://www.greenchristian.org.uk)

Please tick:

- Standard Membership £30
- Concessionary Rate (low income) £12
- Joint/Family/Corporate £40
- Green Christian* (the magazine only) £20
- Church Membership (recommended) £40

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

(GC83)

## Operation Noah joins Global Divestment

Green Christian's sister organisation Operation Noah is a faith partner in the Global Divestment Mobilisation taking place in May.

The initiative is spearheaded by 350.org, the global divestment movement started by Methodist writer and campaigner Bill McKibben. Operation Noah has worked closely with 350.org since launching its Bright Now campaign in 2013, which calls on UK Churches to divest from fossil fuels and reinvest in clean alternatives.

This year's Global Divestment Mobilisation takes place from 5–13 May and will focus on the impacts of climate change. By highlighting the impacts climate change are having on the lives of our brothers and sisters here and around the world, we build the moral urgency for institutions to break their ties with the fossil fuel industry driving this crisis.

Operation Noah is asking Christians to organise events in their local Churches, encouraging their Church to make a divestment commitment and write to national and regional Church investors urging them to do the same. To make this easier, they have produced a "how to" guide, *Divest Your Church* explaining the process of divestment and reinvestment for local Churches.

Other faith-based organisations supporting Global Divestment Mobilisation include Quakers in Britain and Christian Aid. Quakers in Britain are inviting local and area Quaker meetings to commit to divestment or to organise an event to get going on the journey. Christian Aid's campaign is calling on the biggest high street banks to make The Big Shift away from fossil fuels and towards a zero carbon future.

For more information, contact Operation Noah's Bright Now campaigner James Buchanan on james.buchanan@operationnoah.org or visit brightnow.org.uk or globaldivestmentmobilisation.org.uk.

## Green communions held to mark Eco Church anniversary

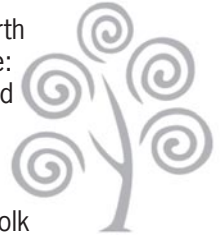


A Rocha UK's hugely popular Eco Church award scheme celebrated its first birthday on 5th February. In its first year over 450 Churches across England and Wales have registered.

EcoChurches show they are caring for God's Earth by focusing on five key areas of Church life; worship and teaching, management of Church buildings, management of church land, lifestyle and community and global engagement, making their way through Bronze, Silver and Gold award levels.

## A Green Christian Gathering

Learning to Live in Earth as our Common Home: Teilhard de Chardin and ecological living as spiritual life.  
June 9-11 2017  
at Ringsfield Hall, Suffolk



Join us for a Green Christian weekend of companionship, stimulating talks, discussion, prayer and good food at Ringsfield EcoActivity Centre, Beccles, Suffolk. Paul Maiteny, an ecologist, anthropologist and transpersonal psychotherapist from The British Teilhard Association will lead the weekend with Chris Walton, Green Christian Chaplain.

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, one of the pioneers of eco-faith, began exploring God's purposes for the Earth and for humanity nearly a century ago. Our world may seem very different today, but in many ways his mystical message of hope is only now coming into its own. It holds both challenge and promise for anyone who cares for the Earth in the 21st century.

Cost for the weekend is £140. The weekend will start on Friday evening with the evening meal at around 6.30pm and ends after lunch on Sunday.

*Together with Christian Climate Action*

## The Bride of Christ & Mr Fossil Fuel

*Invite you to share in their joy  
as they exchange marriage vows  
on Monday, the Eighth of May  
Two Thousand and Seventeen  
at midday*

*Dean's Yard, Great Smith St, Westminster, London SW1P 3NZ*

*We must warn you, there is a possibility that the wedding  
might not go through. There may be an objection.*

*For latest details check CCA's web site  
[www.christianclimateaction.wordpress.com](http://www.christianclimateaction.wordpress.com)*

Three places are available to younger adults and students at a special bursary rate of £100 – you are welcome to ask for further details.

Completed booking forms, downloadable from the GC website [www.greenchristian.org.uk](http://www.greenchristian.org.uk) should be sent to [chrisclownwalton@gmail.com](mailto:chrisclownwalton@gmail.com) or Green Christian Gathering, 59 The Hill, Glapwell, Chesterfield S44 5LX. Email or phone Chris on 07881 941296 for more information.

**Good News for God's Earth** is an environment day at The Green Britain Centre in Swaffham, Norfolk to be hosted by the Diocese of Norwich on Saturday 6th May.

A day of presentations, conversations, activities and worship, with speakers from A Rocha, and Christian Aid and stalls from Mini-Scrapbox Scrap Store, Norfolk Wildlife Trust, Traidcraft, Norwich's Revelation Bookshop and Green Christian!

More details [www.dioceseofnorwich.org](http://www.dioceseofnorwich.org) or contact Liz Dawes on [liz.dawes@dioceseofnorwich.org](mailto:liz.dawes@dioceseofnorwich.org)

### **Quiet25 launched to celebrate 25 years of Quiet Gardens**

The Quiet Garden Movement will celebrate 25 years of nurturing outdoor space for prayer and contemplation by publishing a new course in 2017 to help people explore the benefits of silence.

A global network of over 300 gardens in homes, churches, hospitals and schools, Quiet Gardens are made available by local hosts for everyone to experience silence, and spend time in prayer and contemplation.

"The Quiet Garden Movement is about giving people permission to step back and experience a sense of stillness and wonderment," said founder Revd Philip Roderick.

The new Quiet25 course will be run by local groups. It invites us to use the ancient Christian traditions of contemplation, meditation and prayer, to help nurture silent space in our busy lives.

The Quiet Garden Movement will gather in London On 20 May 2017 to celebrate the accomplishment of the past 25 years, with Revd Lucy Winkett (Rector, St James's Church, Piccadilly), Rev Dr Andrew Walker (Director, St Marylebone Healing and Counselling Centre) and Revd Philip Roderick (Quiet Garden Movement).

### **Big Joy In Enough Workshop in Sheffield**

Joy in Enough, led by Green Christian and supported by many other faith and environmental organisations, is a challenge to Christians in Britain, and an invitation to all people of good will, to join in building a just economy within the ecological limits of the Earth. Our Big Joy in Enough Workshop is at The Foundry, Sheffield on Saturday 18 November.

### **Greenbelt Festival – The Common Good**

Green Christian will again have a presence at the Greenbelt Festival over the August Bank Holiday weekend. Offers of help with the stall from members who are at Greenbelt are welcome. Please get in touch with Clare Redfern [ClareRedfern@GreenChristian.org.uk](mailto:ClareRedfern@GreenChristian.org.uk) if you can join us for a while over the weekend.

### **GC members' letter campaign on land reform and Community Land Trusts**

Since 2003 the Land Reform Scotland Act has allowed Scottish communities to register their interest in local land and granted them a right of pre-emptive purchase if that land were to be sold. If local communities across the UK were to own local land, there could be real environmental benefits so Green Christian's latest members' letter campaign asks you to write to your MP or councillor, local authority or newspaper to publicise the need for reform. To learn more and to see a draft letter, look in the Take Action section of the GC website [www.greenchristian.org.uk](http://www.greenchristian.org.uk)

### **Solar Tax Hike**

Green Christian is one of over 160 organisations who have signed a letter asking the Chancellor to stop the proposed rise in business rates for solar panels. Smaller companies and public sector organisations such as state schools and hospitals could face a six- to eightfold increase in the tax. Private schools are exempt from the tax rise due to their charitable status. This is the latest in a series of policy changes which have led to rooftop solar deployment falling by over 80% in the UK.

### **An invitation to go away – to the remote islands of Bardsey or Lundy**

*Journeying* is a not for profit ecumenical organisation which takes small groups on holiday in an informal Christian ambience to the more off-the-beaten-track parts of Britain and Ireland. If you would like to find out more about this year's destinations, which include Bardsey and Lundy, go to [www.journeying.co.uk](http://www.journeying.co.uk)

### **Anniversary vigil, one year on from Paris agreement.**

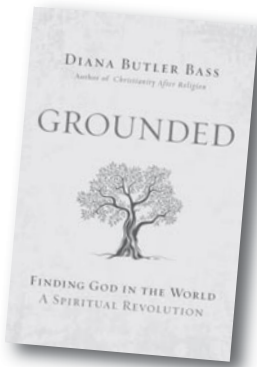
Christian Climate Action have highlighted that the UK government, having ratified the Paris agreement, is taking action which makes climate change worse! On 28th November they held a prayer vigil outside the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) with a banner saying "Happy Birthday Paris, Our condolences to the Arctic."

Ruth Jarman explained "We were praying that this department would implement the huge changes that are required to protect our climate and show the global leadership that the world, and our children, so desperately need."

20kg of melting ice was delivered to the BEIS lobby while the outside of the building was whitewashed to a height of six feet, highlight the fact that current government policies are contributing to melting icecaps and consigning the department to be six foot under water. There were no arrests but the ice was not returned.

Grounded

By Diana Butler Bass  
 October 2015  
 HarperCollins  
 ISBN 9780062328540  
 304 pages  
 RRP £13.99  
 (hardback)



This splendid book could be described as “slow theology”, to be savoured and enjoyed, with its points made through stories and the title fully justified. She writes: “God is ... that which grounds us. We experience this when we understand that soil is holy, water gives life, the sky opens the imagination, our roots matter, home is a divine place, and our lives are linked with our neighbours and with those around the globe. This world, not heaven, is the sacred stage of our times.”

The book’s earthiness appears in the chapter “Dirt”, referencing Fred Bahnson who describes soil as a portal to the world as God intends it to be, and Sallie McFague’s metaphor of “body” for the relationship between God and the world. “What if we saw the Earth as part of the body of God, not as separate from God (who dwells elsewhere) but as the visible reality of the invisible God.”

She writes similarly of water and the sky, summing up their importance and her concern about their abuse by quoting Hildegard of Bingen: “If we fall in love with Creation deeper and deeper, we will respond to its endangerment with passion.”

The chapter “Roots”, explores how we are caught up in a web of belonging, and in “Home” she writes of “Two locations .... have emerged as particularly sacred: the front door and the table, the physical places at home from where we form the spiritual habits of hospitality and gratitude.” She suggests, “to build a house on a good foundation may save the planet. Our homes are a sort of spiritual training ground for what happens in our world house.”

Bass emphasizes the importance of neighbourhood, writing, “The world can

no longer afford tribes intent on purity who believe God blesses only them; the world is longing for tribes that place hospitality front and centre of spiritual practice and work to bless others on their way. We do not need gated neighbourhoods, but neighbourhoods with open gates.”

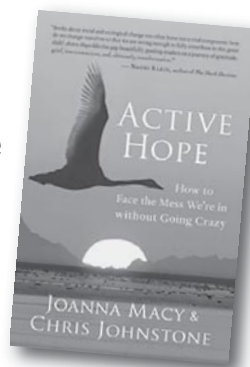
I found the chapter “Commons” most important, discussing the need to recognise the world commons and the spiritual elements of community: *communitas*, the spirit of unity; communion, the spirit of relationship; and compassion, the spirit of action. “*Communitas* emerges when human beings gather, a collective sense of unity. Communion is the sort of sharing that results in a more profound sense of our relationships to each other and the world. And compassion insists that we have a moral responsibility for each other.”

Bass’s lucid exposition of her belief that the distant patriarchal God is gone, replaced by the presence of the Spirit who dwells with Creation and in us, conveys her fundamental Christian convictions as embracing the whole of Creation in a wholly compelling way. It is a profoundly hopeful book and I finished it feeling much encouraged.

Michael Bayley

Active Hope  
 How to Face  
 the Mess We’re  
 in Without  
 Going Crazy

By Joanna Macy  
 and Chris  
 Johnstone  
 April 2012  
 New World Library  
 ISBN 978-1-57731-972-6  
 288 pages  
 RRP £14.99 (paperback)



The tides of populism and the resulting dire state of politics in both Europe and the United States might mean that this book, although published a few years ago, is just the right thing to read at this point in our history. It certainly does feel as though the world is in a mess, and here is an attempt to

present a positive response to its environmental crisis. The main principle is what the joint authors, Joanna Macy and Chris Johnstone, call Active Hope. As they explain, “our focus is on how... we can best play our part, whatever that may be, in the healing of our world.” The hope they look for is active, in learning a way to be in which “we not only give but we receive in so many ways as well.”

In the introduction, three possible scenarios are suggested. The first is Business as Usual, playing down warnings and insisting that there is no need to change the established way in which we live. According to this perspective, the welfare of society depends on continued wealth-creating beyond anything else. The second is the Great Unravelling, according to which our destruction of the environment is already irreversible and there is nothing we can do. Yet the third story comes from refusing the cynical self-seeking denial of the first, while taking quite seriously the warnings of the second but looking for an alternative to its sheer despair. This is the vision of the Great Turning. “Involving the emergence of new and creative human responses, it is about the epochal transition from an industrial society committed to economic growth to a life-sustaining society committed to the healing and recovery of our world.”

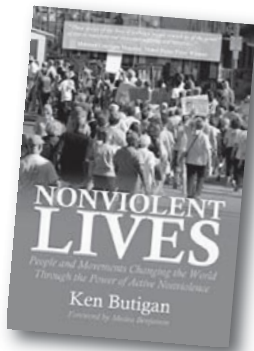
Macy and Johnstone then take us on a journey round what they call the spiral of the “Work That Reconnects”. The spiral starts by refreshing our human capacity for gratitude, then in being true to the pain we must feel for the world, so that finally we may come to see with new eyes, and go forth in a positive and constructive way of life, to face the future with active hope. Joanna Macy comes from the Buddhist tradition, and is an academic and a lifelong environmental activist based in the United States. Chris Johnstone has been a doctor in the NHS, and through developing a role in coaching became involved in Macy’s vision of Work That Reconnects. This book comes out of workshops they have run over the years and each chapter seeks to offer practical tools, ending with Try This boxes.

Five years after it was first published, their book remains important. For we can recognise the persistence of the Business as Usual story in our world today, with its attempted re-assertion in the United States and elsewhere. Yet surely a key element in the phenomenon of protest-populism is our entering into the despair of the Great Unravelling? So its analysis is helpful for our Green Christian project of Joy in Enough, and its positive outlook with practical applications is exactly what we are trying to encourage as Way of Life Companions and Explorers.

Andrew Norman

**Nonviolent Lives**  
**People and Movements**  
**Changing the World Through the**  
**Power of Active Nonviolence**  
 By Ken Butigan  
 November 2016 Pace e Bene Press  
 ISBN 978-0-9978337-0-6 214 pages  
 £16.75 (paperback)

This book is an inspiring catalogue of contemporary compassion, courage and conciliation. It is largely USA centered, but it includes a few individuals with an international reputation, such as Wangari Maathai. Among the 35 names celebrated are a few well known, such as Dorothy Day, Martin Luther King, Cesar Chavez, Thomas Merton, Daniel Berrigan and Naryan Desai, Gandhi's last living disciple. Gandhi's methods and ideals have influenced most of the courage described in the text.



There are three sections: Part 1: *Nonviolent Lives in Action*, Part 2: *Nonviolent Lives Up Close* and Part 3: *Nonviolent Lives Working Together*. This is not a history of nonviolence (such as can be found in Mark Kurlansky's *Non-Violence; A History of a Dangerous Idea*, Cape, 2006) but a description of peace in action, the whys and wherefores of practical steps

to counter injustice and promote peace. It includes tales of sit-ins, passive resistance and marches, all designed to resist injustice, violation of the environment and war.

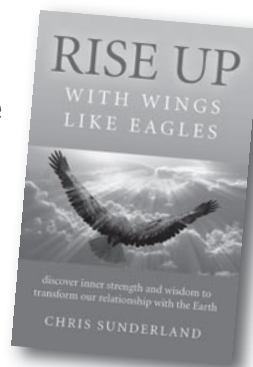
Pace e Bene is a service to support those who need to resist nonviolently. It is concerned with green issues and human rights. It offers an antidote to despair and a place for hope, whether it is on a demonstration in Seattle at the World Trade Organisation or by an individual advocating human rights. It offers training and support for those who seek to end injustice, from Guantanamo to the anti-drone movement.

My one regret is that there is no index. The text could be useful as a basis for discussion, sermons or correspondence; an index would have been particularly useful. However, the short chapters help to find information relatively quickly.

Pace e Bene encourages the growth of grassroots, bottom up, people power to counter war, poverty, racism, intolerance, climate change and violence against the Earth. To act in a nonviolent way causes difficulties for those who espouse and use violence. We need a just society in so many different ways, and reading this book is a way to begin such adventures for the common good, meeting that need with our own courage.

John Smith

**Rise Up**  
**with Wings like**  
**Eagles**  
 By Chris Sunderland  
 December 2016  
 Earth Books  
 ISBN 978 1  
 78535 464 9  
 220 pages  
 RRP £14.99 (paperback)



Recent political changes across the world are leading us into searches for pragmatic solutions to the many environmental problems which they present. How can we manage change?

Are we becoming obsessed with legislating our way into a more secure future? Sunderland's book offers us a very different way forward, based not on words but on being more in tune with the natural world. As he says; "Suddenly I realized that our relationship with the Earth would be the big narrative of the 21st century and that solving this was probably the greatest challenge that human beings have ever faced." Sunderland is well-qualified to offer a balanced perspective having had a strong science focus in his first career as a post-graduate researcher in biochemistry. He later changed course to become an urban vicar.

There are 12 very meaty chapters in this tour de force, separated into three sections. In Part I Sunderland takes the reader into how we perceive the world around us, stressing the need to engage with life beyond words and to permit emotion and empathy into our armoury. We thus unearth a world that remains hidden within us.

He then, in Part II, explores the conventional approaches to planning our way forward and where these have failed us, lining up the "subversion of science" and "short-sighted economics" for comment. Our current political systems also fail to engage with the big questions that face society. Sunderland notes that Christian organisations such as A Rocha exist, but he refers to "human-centred" religions as on the whole failing to rise to the challenge of living in harmony with the Earth.

Part III explores the challenges we face if humankind is to avoid a future which would take us into "the most terrible misery and destruction that the planet has ever seen". Sunderland's way forward involves humankind engaging with "the sacred space within us" and the need to teach ourselves to live and work together. The author's final exhortation is to "walk on and let's make the world a better place for all that lives". I found this book an inspiring re-think of how we address the natural world in which we live.

Rev. Dr. John Harrison

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## The Nature of Environmental Stewardship

By Johnny

Wei-Bing Lin,

December 2016

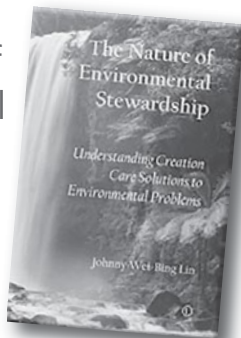
Lutterworth Press

ISBN

9780718894672

326 pages

RRP £24.95 (paperback)



In recent decades the Christian Church has rediscovered or reconnected with its theology and spirituality of the environment. As the reality of climate change has come into sharper focus, Christians are asking themselves what they can contribute to the discussion about how to combat its causes and effect. A major, but not the only, answer to that question must be the Christian understanding of stewardship of Creation. The ill-informed Enlightenment interpretation of “dominion” in Genesis 1.26 to mean “domination” has resulted in the terrifying destruction of habitats, overuse of species for food and the pollution of rivers, land, sea and air. By contrast, a true understanding of dominion invites people to acknowledge that we live in one world in which we all share the responsibility to manage Creation equitably, both for our own and future generations. The proper stewardship of Creation is key to this. But what exactly does “Environmental Stewardship” mean? That is the essential question this book seeks to answer.

It has not proved simple. Indeed, the strength of this book is that it is totally realistic about the complexity of the answer. The consequence is a book of considerable detail, offering an exhaustive analysis of the options and identifying the priorities with clarity. It would be a shame if the wealth of detail were to deter the general reader, for in this volume we have not only a sympathetically critical scientific appraisal of the choices (the author was Professor of Physics at North Park University in the USA) but also a detailed Biblical context and justification for his proposals.

To make his points, Dr. Lin employs the device of an extended “parable” which begins each chapter and narrates the day to day decision making of a hypothetical Church community in relation to Creation care (Lin’s preferred term). Experienced environmentalists may find the tone of the narrative slightly patronising, but it succeeds in imaginatively illustrating the depth of environmental concern and the different ways in which Creation care might provide solutions. Lin also provides, at the end of each chapter, helpful and penetrating questions for discussion.

This book argues strongly that environmental stewardship is a Biblical imperative and that its implementation as a solution to Climate Change will be complex and varied. In the end, the author is optimistic about our ability to respond to the challenges of global warming. As he writes: “the nature of environmental stewardship, while undetermined and complex, does not compel us to respond with pessimism ... our examination of environmental stewardship instead justifies an optimism regarding the future” (pages 277-278). This book is an excellent tool to help concerned Christians to understand the demands of environmental stewardship and to discover ways to respond that are effective, biblical and necessary.

Rev. Dr. John Harrison

## Way of Love Recovering the Heart of Christianity

By Norman

Wirzba

March 2016

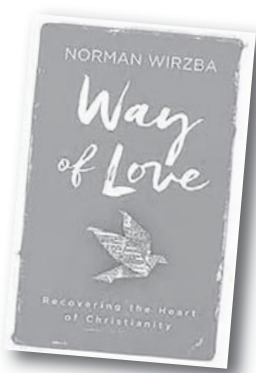
HarperOne

ISBN 978-0062385819

258 pages

RRP £7.99 (Kindle) £12.22

(paperback) £23.99 (hardback)



Norman Wirzba is an academic theologian from Duke University in the USA. He is a scholar with a deep

interest in environmental questions and has written many books, notably *Food and Faith*, *From Nature to Creation* and *Living the Sabbath*. All these are worthwhile but *Way of Love* is written in a particularly attractive, accessible and inspirational style. This is a preacherly book, by which I mean not that it is written in a dry, judgemental manner but that it is engaging and immediate. Norman wants to renew our faith and turn us around, and I would recommend this book to those new to the faith and also to preachers seeking a fresh overview of Christianity.

Wirzba finds the interpretative key to Christianity in the concept of love; both God’s love for us and our response to that love. He is a skilled theologian but wears his learning lightly. Here he applies the concept of love to the fourfold themes of the Christian message, and these are the sections into which the book is divided. He begins with Creation where love is made visible, moves onto the Fall as the failure of love, explores redemption when love heals and restores, and ends with hope, which is love’s ultimate victory. Each theme is illustrated with stories drawn from life, from literature and from film.

From our point of view as Green Christians, the section on Creation is particularly clear and full of insight. Wirzba comes from a farming background and his debt to Wendell Berry is clear not only in his discussion of Creation but also in his analysis of what it means to be fallen. Norman’s account of hope and of the meaning and place of heaven within the Christian vision is practical, scriptural and deeply moving. He lifts us up with a vision within which we can discern heaven in the here and now, a foretaste of the kingdom of love that is God’s will for all His creatures.

I hope that I have written enough to persuade you to read this book, and I would further recommend that you buy it if you are called upon to preach or speak on green Christian themes. I have personally found it to be a valuable investment and that I return to it again and again.

Peter Grimwood

# A Song of Earth Grief

Hear the silent weeping of the trees:  
And all our hollow dying and our maddened falling from the light.  
We, who gave you myriad soil-friends;  
We, who gave you the fresh air to breathe  
Are now cut down and gone:  
The screaming of the saw our only mourner at the burning pyres.

Hear the living word of the trees:  
Our lives were ceaseless intimacies of being,  
Forever cycling earth to air and back again.  
We were at rest, rooted in our community of peace: until you came  
And gave us up in praise to the altar of extinction.

What is it to you that the stumps of our lives die under  
a burning sun?

Hear the holy wisdom of the trees:  
Once we embraced the whole earth,  
And our canopy of love shielded all life.  
We poured out sap-water to baptise you with our sessile faith.  
Our leaves were a compost of hope – and we littered the world for you.  
In return, you gave us many wounds  
Until we were logged and milled and shredded to oblivion.

Hear the secret benediction of the trees:  
When we are gone and the worlds we nurtured extinct,  
Trace our remains: stand on the stumps of our lives – and find us.  
For this is our grief, which we cannot bear,  
That the arc of our being will dry and die,  
And those aquastats of joy which carried you to paradise  
Will be no more.

(Written on the anniversary of the Somme, 1st July, 2006; poet unknown)

# Retreat Weekend

9 – 11 June 2017

at Ringsfield EcoActivity Centre Suffolk

## Learning to Live in Earth as our Common Home:

Teilhard de Chardin and ecological living as spiritual life

Join us for a Green Christian weekend of companionship, stimulating talks, discussion, prayer and good food at Ringsfield EcoActivity Centre, Beccles, Suffolk. Paul Maiteny, an ecologist, anthropologist and transpersonal psychotherapist from The British Teilhard Association will lead the weekend with Chris Walton, Chaplain to Green Christian.

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, one of the pioneers of eco-faith, began exploring God's purposes for the Earth and for humanity nearly a century ago. Our world may seem very different today, but in many ways his mystical message of hope is only now coming into its own. It holds both challenge and promise for anyone who cares for the Earth in the 21st century.

**Cost £140.00**

Bookings: Send a booking form with a deposit (or full price) to Chris Walton, 59 The Hill, Glapwell, Chesterfield, Derbyshire, S44 5LX, or [chrisclownwalton@gmail.com](mailto:chrisclownwalton@gmail.com)

See our website for more details and a booking form.



## Quiet25 launched to celebrate 25 years of Quiet Gardens

The Quiet Garden Movement will celebrate 25 years of nurturing outdoor space for prayer and contemplation by publishing a new course in 2017 to help people explore the benefits of silence.

A global network of over 300 gardens in homes, churches, hospitals and schools, Quiet Gardens are made available by local hosts for everyone to experience silence, and spend time in prayer and contemplation.

"The Quiet Garden Movement is about giving people permission to step back and experience a sense of stillness and wonderment," said founder Reverend Philip Roderick.

"The new Quiet25 course will be run by local groups. It invites us to use the ancient Christian traditions of contemplation, meditation and prayer, to help nurture silent space in our busy lives.

The Quiet Garden Movement will gather in London On 20 May 2017 to celebrate the accomplishment of the past 25 years, with Revd Lucy Winkett (Rector, St James's Church, Piccadilly), Rev Dr Andrew Walker (Director, St Marylebone Healing and Counselling Centre) and Revd Philip Roderick (Quiet Garden Movement).

## A prayer for our Earth from *Laudato Si'*

All-powerful God, You are present in the whole universe and in the smallest of Your creatures.

You embrace with Your tenderness all that exists.

Pour out upon us the power of Your love,

That we may protect life and beauty.

Fill us with peace, that we may live as brothers and sisters, harming no one.

O God of the poor, help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this Earth, so precious in your eyes.

Bring healing to our lives,

that we may protect the world and not prey on it,

that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.

Touch the hearts

of those who look only for gain at the expense of the poor and the Earth.

Teach us to discover the worth of each thing,

to be filled with awe and contemplation,

to recognize that we are profoundly united with every creature

as we journey towards Your infinite light.

We thank You for being with us each day.

Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle for justice, love and peace.



**GreenChristian**