

After Brexit

The outcomes of the UK referendum on the EU and the US Presidential election came as a surprise and shock to many. We may feel that we no longer recognise our own country, that we no longer understand the people around us, that we have opposing concerns and objectives. The evidence available suggests that most church-going people (around 58%) voted Leave whereas our impression would be that most people who share Green Christian's outlook voted Remain. It's instructive to remember that the pioneers of the European unity project were devout Catholic Christians committed to peace and reconciliation.

However we are where we are. The EU as a project has failed to engage the sentimental support of Europe's peoples. It is seen as bureaucratic, undemocratic and committed to globalisation – a trend in economic affairs that is believed to have favoured the privileged, increased inequality and impoverished those who see themselves as left behind.

We must be wary of our own political standpoints and enthusiasms. God's providence is wiser than our political projects. God is the painter of the big picture and we need to find our place in God's picture rather than fitting God into our picture. It is a mistake to identify the Christian Gospel with any one set of political arrangements. Here we have no abiding city. We are citizens of the city of God, not citizens of the EU, or the UK or, to turn back in time, the Roman Empire whether Holy or otherwise. In almost every generation this has to be re-discovered, sometimes in rather painful circumstances.

In Biblical times the prophets firmly believed that the security of the people of God lay in faithfulness towards God's covenant – a covenant that embraces all Creation. Lasting security and ultimate meaning are not to be found in foreign alliances or political

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

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



systems. In terms of caring for God's Earth, nothing has changed in our relationship with God and our first commission:

**God spoke: "Let us make human beings in our image,
make them reflecting our nature
So they can be responsible for the fish in the sea,
the birds in the air, the cattle,
And, yes, Earth itself,
and every animal that moves on the face of Earth."**

(The Message, Genesis 1, v 26)

In a world which doesn't acknowledge God, competitive growth economics rules, to the detriment of all on the planet. But humans are made in God's image, we reflect God's nature, and we are **responsible** for every living creature on Earth. This includes their habitats – oceans, forests, mountains, rivers and deserts, swamps and moorland and the atmosphere – and of course it includes our fellow human beings.

Post-Brexit uncertainty need not prevent us from having hope. Hope is not the same as optimism. Hope is deeper and stronger and springs out of faith and obedience to God, which leads us to joy. Human laws and political will may fail in caring for the planet, but God's Word will never fail.



Tanya says:

Being a Green Christian feels like a tautology to me, but it can still sometimes be difficult. The Green Christian organisation helps me to recover the spiritual underpinning to my activism, and to discern the practical outworkings of my faith. Without both, I would be lost.

Storm of Hope

It's a challenge to know what to do with our grief and anger when faced with the losses sustained by our planet, both in the

recent past and in the future: the destruction of forests, mountains and rivers; the loss of the polar ice caps and the glaciers which provide drinking water for millions; the over-fishing of the oceans; the species driven to extinction. We know we have lost 58% of the world's animals in the last 40 years.

To live with hope is part of our call to live as disciples of Jesus. Hopeful living, in the name of Jesus, often brings opposition, difficulties and resistance. These are the consequences of living in obedience to Christ: our **Storm of Hope**.

The green shoots of hope aren't always easy to spot, when the news is full of stories that make us despair. But here are a few:

- **The Paris Agreement** on climate change adopted in 2015 has been signed by **194** Parties and ratified or otherwise joined by **118** Parties representing **80%** of global emissions. For the Paris Agreement to enter into force, 55 Parties representing at least 55% of global emissions must join (cait.wri.org/source/ratification).
- **India is on track to beat its Paris targets** years ahead of schedule, according to a draft government report. It is expected that 57% of the country's electricity will come from non-fossil fuel sources by 2027 (India's Paris goal is 40% non-fossil fuel electricity by 2030). The report also noted that no new coal-fired power plants would be needed (http://www.cea.nic.in/reports/committee/nep/nep_dec.pdf).
- **Walmart** – the world's largest company – has plans to become more sustainable. Their target for 2025 includes zero waste to landfill in four of its major markets, achieving science-based emission reduction targets by running on 50% renewable energy, and expanding sustainable sourcing to cover 20 of their key commodities (<http://corporate.walmart.com/2016grr>).

As green Christians we can do something significant with our grief and anger. We can act in hope, make a difference where we are, resist the forces of materialism and exploitation. We can call those in authority to account; we can sign petitions and write letters. We can live a low-carbon life. We can educate our children about living lightly. We can remember our first calling, as God's people to work in partnership with God. We can do small things with great love.



Eco Church – an A Rocha UK project

Our friends at A Rocha remind us that a new year brings new hope (arocha.org.uk). Part of that hope lies with Christian Churches. Christians everywhere are waking up to our Biblical mandate to care for the Earth.

A Rocha's new Eco Church programme (formerly Eco Congregation) was launched a year ago, and consists of a free online survey and resources to help Churches think through worship and teaching, buildings and land, lifestyle, and local community. The programme engages participants at all levels including locally, globally and personally. Working through the programme leads to awards at Bronze, Silver or Gold level.

A Rocha's vision is for Churches of all denominations to care for Creation as an integral part of loving their neighbours and following God faithfully.

So far around 400 Churches have signed up to Eco Church – has yours? Don't be left behind.

Remember the gospel is for all Creation – good news for God's Earth.

For more information:

<http://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk/>

We can't do it alone

On Christmas Day 2016 The Queen broadcast her Christmas message, in which she referred to Mother Teresa (now St Teresa of Calcutta), who once said:

"Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love."
(Mother Teresa was quoting St Thérèse of Lisieux.)

The Queen herself is a follower of Jesus and tells us that His example helps her to see the value of doing small things with great love.

As disciples of Jesus, few of us will be called to do great things. We cannot save the planet on our own. We can't singlehandedly prevent the Arctic from melting, or Indonesian forests from being burnt. But when we work together, and undertake to do small things with great love, the cumulative effect can be very great.

**Christ has no body now
on Earth but ours,
no hands but ours,
no feet but ours.
Ours are the eyes through
which Christ's compassion
is to look out to the Earth,
ours are the feet by which
He is to go about doing good,
and ours are the hands by
which He is to bless us now.**

St Teresa of Avila

David says:

I delight in the beauty of God's Creation, the harmony of natural ecosystems, the plentiful bounty of the world with its resources able to enrich lives. I want my grandchildren to have the same joy... I weep for our polluted seas, evidenced by shoreline plastic and rubbish. I despair of our unclean air and the illness it can bring. I fear for our degraded soil that provides our staple foods... I yearn for a sustainable balance that preserves God's world while providing sustenance and good living conditions for all.



Let 2017 be the year that you join with others to protect our planet, locally and further afield. You could join a Christian environmental organisation, sign petitions, write to your MP, or be involved in conservation activities – there are many options!

As a start, consider offsetting your carbon emissions with Christian Organisation Climate Stewards: www.climatestewards.org

The Green Christian Way of Life Community

Finding our Path and Walking Gently Together



The Green Christian Way of Life Community is a creative, new (January 2016) venture calling for deeper engagement and shared encouragement for those for whom a Creation-centred faith in all its forms is a fundamental outworking of their way of being and living. Members of this dispersed community (who may or may not be members of Green Christian) are called *Companions*.

Many of us find that we feel isolated or alone in following a commitment to faith in God through Creation care. The energy of the Way of Life Community exists to bind Companions together as we dedicate ourselves to a Way (or Rule) of Life which is defined by four disciplines: Daily Prayer & Devotions; Living Gently on the Earth; Public Witness; and Encouragement. This is helping us experience a way of being.

Following a weekend gathering in May 2015 when we explored how a Way (or Rule) of Life might be appropriate for Green Christian, we held our inaugural conference in January 2016, when many attendees registered as Companions.



Fresh produce: healthy and life-giving

During this first year a small working group has been developing processes which support our dispersed community of Companions in their journey. We are in the process of helping them to link up to encourage each other. We have a Liturgy of Commitment which can be used when new Companions register, whenever Companions meet up or individually in their prayer and devotions. The working group is currently looking at how we might use a dedicated page on the website to provide regular Way "newsletters" and as a platform to enable Companions to share their thoughts and insights from their Way of Life Community journeys.

We held our second conference in January 2017 on "Nurturing Creation - (Re)discovering a Radical Creation-centred Way of Being". Our inspirational keynote speaker was Rev Dr Martin Poulsom SDB, Head of Theology, Convener, MA in Christian Theology and BA in Theology at Heythrop College, University of London. A report of what happened on the day is available on the website.

For more information please see www.greenchristian.org.uk/way/

Doing small things with great love

- ▶ **2.5 billion paper cups are thrown away in the UK every year!** Take your own reusable mug to work or when you travel. Give reusable cups as presents.
- ▶ **The UK bottled water industry releases 350,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide each year**, with many people using over 100 bottles a year. Plastic bottles take over 700 years to start decomposing. Invest in a reusable bottle and drink tap water. <http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/etc/news-water.php>
- ▶ **Eat less meat, eat more veg!** Look for local producers. Buy only what's in season locally. Check those food miles!
- ▶ **The clothing industry is the second largest polluter in the world**, after oil. Nearly one-third of UK clothing goes to landfill. Buy fewer clothes. Recycle your old clothes. Buy second-hand.
- ▶ **Say no to plastic straws.** Each day, MacDonalds customers in the UK use and discard 3.5 million straws. 500 million straws are used in the USA every day!
<http://blogs.worldwatch.org/plastic-straws-a-life-cycle/>



Bottled water: expensive and polluting

Join us

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

Membership is £30 a year, or £12 if you are on a low income (less with standing order). Use the form below to send your details to: Green Christian Membership Secretary, Flat 1, 31 St James Terrace, Buxton SK17 6HS.

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



GreenChristian

Facebook
www.facebook.com/ChristianEcologyLink

Twitter
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info@greenchristian.org.uk

Telephone
0845 459 8460

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97 Plumpton Avenue,
Hornchurch RM12 6BB.

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

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

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

Your details:

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Please complete the following details to subscribe by Standing Order:

Your bank: (Bank/Building Society)

Address:

Postcode:

Account name (block capitals):

Account no: Sort code:

Instruction to your bank or building society:

Please pay £ annually to Green Christian.

The Co-operative Bank, GLOUCESTER 2 BRANCH,

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

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

Date of first payment:

(two months ahead please, to allow for administration)

Signature: Date:

Gift Aid declaration:

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

Signature: Date:

Ref No. (Green Christian to complete)

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

Key Green Christian events in 2017 –
for more details visit www.greenchristian.org.uk.

Green Christian's annual retreat: "Learning to Live in Earth as our Common Home".

9-11 June, Ringsfield EcoActivity Centre, Beccles, Suffolk, NR34 8JR. Paul Maiteny, an ecologist, anthropologist and transpersonal psychotherapist from The British Teilhard Association will lead the weekend with Revd Dr 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 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.

Join us for a Green Christian weekend of companionship, stimulating talks, discussion, prayer and good food. For booking please see our website.

Our Annual Members' Meeting

Saturday 18 November, 10am, The Foundry, Sheffield, followed by a Big Workshop on our "Joy in Enough" initiative. An opportunity to contribute to the work of Green Christian, and to gain inspiration for your own.

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

Gatherings: conferences, retreats and workshops every year.

Local groups: 13 groups directly affiliated to Green Christian, and we offer support, advice and materials to others.

Prayer: a daily *Prayer Guide* available by e-mail, on our website or by post (published monthly).

Campaigns: **LOAF** promotes food which is Locally Grown, Organically produced, Animal friendly and Fairly traded. In **Joy in Enough** we promote an alternative economy free from economic growth, debt and the obligation to consume (we are grateful to the Passionist order for their generous funding contribution to this initiative).

Way of Life Community: a dispersed community who value and live by the disciplines of Prayer, Living Gently, Public Witness and Encouragement.

Green Christian magazine: a full-colour magazine published twice a year, packed with news, thought-provoking articles, reviews of books and other media, and resources. We offer the option of receiving our mailings by email in pdf format.

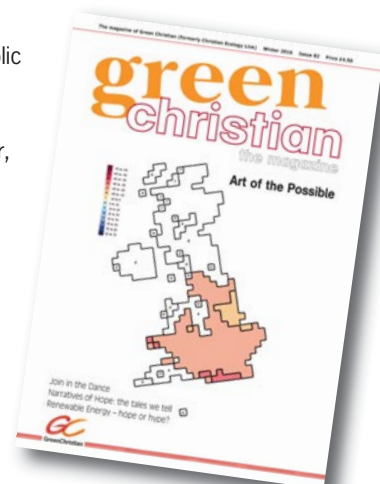
Exhibition materials: a range of leaflets, banners and posters for events and displays giving a Christian perspective on environmental topics.

CELINK: a discussion forum and social network for the exchange of news and advice.

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

Website: www.greenchristian.org.uk

Further details at www.greenchristian.org.uk or contact our Information Officer at 97 Plumpton Avenue, Hornchurch, RM12 6BB



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