

Storm of hope

2018

A Way of Life with Green Christian

Ordinary Christians, Extraordinary Times



Gardener's Hands holding young tree
(Mark Boulton)

Earth's unprecedented ecological crisis is a spiritual crisis, rather than a crisis of the material world.

It is increasingly clear that the root of our troubles lies in our world view and our customary methods of thinking in terms of scientific, economic, political and technological solutions to global warming, resource depletion, environmental destruction, and species extinction.

We need a change of heart, a turning away from unhelpful and wrong practices, and a heart-felt and faith-inspired turning towards a new way of life – a new beginning. This is far from impossible. God has a way of intervening in history to change hearts and minds. God loves the world so much that He sent us Jesus, fully human and fully God, to walk with us. We look forward to a time of renewed faith, hope and love, joy and gladness.

Together, guided by the Holy Spirit, we can make a difference. It's clear that we cannot continue as usual.

Our Creator God has known all along what we are now beginning to discover: our complete dependence on the Creation that gives us life and sustains us; that what's good for the planet is good for people too; and that concentrating on short-term gain means long-term loss.

In our hearts we know Jesus would never authorise the destruction of Amazonian rainforest for soya plantations, the persistent pollution of northern wildernesses for tar oil sands, or the blasting of mountaintops for rare earth minerals. Nor would Jesus sanction the displacement of whole peoples because of conflicts over land and water; or the floods, droughts and hurricanes from our profligate burning of fossil fuels; or the current rate of species extinction. These changes are so enormous that once they have happened there is no turning back. Ancient landscapes will bear the scars of our industrial activity for millennia. The sea level will remain higher. Extinct species cannot be revived. Humans, bearing the image of God, have the responsibility to act towards each other and the Earth and all the inhabitants of the Earth, as God would. God loves Creation and created it to operate in a balanced and sustainable way – which is not how we are currently managing it.



Matt says:

The Way of Life Community helps me to keep focused on what I'm called to do as a Green activist and Church leader. In a messy and complex world where there is so much need for action, the four "Rules" help me to remember the joy of simplicity. It's wonderful to know that I am walking with others along this difficult but rewarding path of loving the Earth and all its creatures.

**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**

Green Christian's Aims

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.

We are responsible for our impact on God's Creation. Since 1982 Green Christian has been helping members to understand and relate our responsibilities to our faith. Green Christian supports Christians from all backgrounds and traditions.

We offer insights into ecology and the environment to Christian people and Churches, and we offer Christian insights to the Green movement.

"People already care about climate change – the trick is getting them to realise it." **Professor Katharine Hayhoe**, a Christian and climate scientist. www.katharinehayhoe.com

Sue says:

I live between Psalm 24.1 and Genesis 2.15: Yes, I am of the Lord's Creation! I should take only my share, rethink lifestyle, have just enough. The Way of Life Community disciplines help: daily prayer to God who walks with me; limiting the effect of my living; giving strength to speak out; encouraging others. My Companions' Group meets at the Royal Festival Hall. Our conversations resonate long afterwards.



Finding our Path and Walking Gently Together

Green Christian supports members in their own Church congregations, and in the wider world. We offer many resources, from daily prayer prompts to sermon outlines, updates on environmental events throughout the UK, an online discussion group, *Green Christian Magazine*, leaflets, information about campaigns, suggestions for letter-writing, and regular workshops, conferences and retreats.

Recently we have become aware that this may not be enough! There is a growing desire for a deeper spirituality, and a growing desire amongst members and supporters to be more closely connected to each other.

It's become apparent that we live at a tipping point, in our relationships with each other, with the Earth, and with our Creator: it is a time of promise and judgement, a Kairos moment. In Greek, Kairos means "the right, critical or opportune moment", a short and urgent window of opportunity in which to act.

So it's an opportune moment for us in Green Christian to discern our future direction and the way we work. Here are some of our conclusions:

- ▶ a more coherent annual cycle of events and communications, including local events.
- ▶ more opportunities for members to engage with each other, in person and digitally; and with the work of Green Christian.
- ▶ Green Christian will continue to be a unique and welcoming space where members can share what's on their hearts, through the Celink forum, Facebook and local groups.
- ▶ Green Christian will help members grow in active and effective discipleship.
- ▶ The **Green Christian Way of Life Community**, with its fourfold commitment to prayer, lifestyle, action and encouragement, will support and nourish the wider Green Christian membership, with insights and experience.

Most people care very much what happens to Earth. But none of us want to point fingers and assign blame to others; none of us want to feel guilty about the part we play. These feelings become a powerful suppressive motivation for keeping quiet. People are not having the important conversations that are needed in order to feel less isolated, to work together, and to make a difference – even in the Churches.

Within Green Christian we initiate these important conversations about the ecological crisis, both on our website and in our campaigns, literature, and annual national events such as workshops, conferences and retreats (see page 4). **Operation Noah** began as a Green Christian climate change campaign and is now an independent charity (operationnoah.org/). **Joy in Enough** has been the focus of several conferences and may also become independent (joyinenough.org).

Joining together with others makes a great deal of difference. Emotionally and psychologically we feel connected and supported, and can achieve much more in our personal lives, nationally, internationally, and within our Churches, sometimes the most daunting of all.

Joy in Enough is a programme initiated by Green Christian which seeks a vision for a just and sustainable economy, informed not only by our faith traditions but also by the best that social science can offer us. We promote an alternative economy free from growth, debt and the obligation to consume. www.joyinenough.org

The Green Christian Way of Life Community

Many spiritual communities have a set of disciplines to assist believers in living out their faith in a deeper and more structured way.

As we reorganise the way Green Christian operates, with much more emphasis on giving members and supporters the opportunity to participate at the heart of all we do, we offer the newly-formed **Green Christian Way of Life Community**, with its commitment to the four disciplines of Prayer, Living Gently, Public Witness, and Encouragement. Those who want to make a formal commitment to the disciplines and to the Community are called Companions. This is a dispersed community, with annual gatherings, and Companions encourage each other by meeting and speaking regularly.

If you would like to know more about the Community and the Companions please see our website www.greenchristian.org.uk/way/ or contact George Dow georgedow@greenchristian.org.uk

Show the Love

The Climate Coalition encourages us all to take part in their month-long action on climate change this February. We're including a **Show the Love** sticker with our January mailing of *Storm of Hope*. For more information: www.theclimatecoalition.org/show-the-love/

The vast majority of the work in Green Christian is carried out unpaid. Green Christian Trustees meet three times a year, and have telephone conference calls between meetings. Our AGM is usually in November. Some members help with membership, distribution of resources, website and the *Prayer Diary*. Others contribute by producing material for topic leaflets; organising events; taking Green Christian posters and publications to local and national events such as Greenbelt; and in many other ways.

We welcome offers of help.



George says:

Being a Companion of the Way of Life Community is like carrying a little wooden cross in my pocket: the vertical being a daily reminder of my connectedness to God and the Earth, and the horizontal reaching out to other Companions who are, by their own prayer lives and actions, walking on a similar path and providing me with encouragement and affirmation.

Prayer and Devotions

The **Green Christian Way of Life** is about whole-life discipleship, so we start with prayer and Bible study, connecting with our Lord Who sustains us and all the world. Many of us know the temptation of leaping straight into activity, but we need sure foundations.

Jesus is the Vine, we are the branches. We draw our nourishment and strength from Jesus. "Apart from me you can do nothing." John 15. The Vine grew and came to maturity on Earth. Vines grow very deep, and the roots are deep and strong (six metres is not uncommon).

The Green Christian monthly *Prayer Diary* contains daily topical pointers for prayer and further reflection, and can be downloaded from the website.

Question: How can our prayers for the Earth become full of hope and not fear?

Living Gently on the Earth

We are **in** Creation, we are **of** Creation, we cannot live **without** Creation.

Many people are disconnected from Creation, sometimes finding it distasteful, untidy, or dirty. Some believe our only hope is to colonise other planets.

Yet gardens, trees and natural landscapes heal people. Troubled young people who spend time in nature become less troubled. Mental, emotional, and physical health improve.

At the same time we know some terrible statistics: the UK imports more than 50% of our food, and much is wasted. Earth's sixth mass extinction is underway. Rainforests are burning. On TV, *Blue Planet 2* programmes show the vulnerability of the oceans as never before.

A unique gift from God to humans is imagination. We can look back to the past and forward into the future. This gift can be harnessed not just in worry but in hope, learning from the past to give hope for the future.

We start with ideas in the leaflet *Nine Ways to Live Gently on the Earth*, as well as following LOAF principles for meals, and engaging in the Joy in Enough initiative. Living gently leads to simplicity of lifestyle, although sometimes the gentle way may not be simple to achieve, and there will always be challenges to overcome.

Question: In what new ways can we learn to live gently on the Earth? What are our personal challenges?

Public Witness

There is so much we can do: give out *Storm of Hope* to friends and at Church; arrange a LOAF meal; pick up litter; invite people to events; write to local politicians, clergy and other leaders; spread messages of hope and effective action; grow food in public places such as front gardens; chat to people; become involved in local projects; become a speaker at local events.

Jesus Himself trod lightly on the Earth, fed the poor and reminds us that all Creation is within God's care. Remembering this we have reason to be joyful and talk meaningfully about possibilities for change.

Every action counts, and we do it for love – you never know who is being influenced.

Question: Which new areas of Public Witness can you imagine yourself doing? What kind of commitment could you make?

Encouragement

Much of the vocabulary around the ecological crisis deals in guilt, blame and fear. This literally hopeless message is of no use. What Christians bring is the reality of forgiveness, and restoration to wholeness. In us, God can do a new thing, and a new mode of living and being can begin with us. We can share that experience in a joyful way. When our mode of living is seen as joyful, peaceful and loving, others are encouraged.

Companions of the Way of Life Community undertake to support and encourage each other, in prayer and in person, regularly throughout the year. We meet annually to share the Service of Commitment. We can also meet in small regional groups or keep in touch by email, telephone or letter.

Question: What kind of encouragement do you most need? What can you give?

Prayers from the Way of Life Community Service of Commitment

Bless, O God,
Our desire to live sustainably
 Bless, O God,
Our hope for all to see Creation's beauty.
 Bless, O God,
Our care for the environment.
 Bless, O God,
The small things we do for Your world.
 Bless around us, O God,
Those who find ways to live in harmony with creation.
 Bless us, O God,
That we may be whole and live as You created us to be.

A Blessing

May the Earth sustain our strength,
 may Christ sustain our love,
 may we sustain one another's joy:
 and may we live as a blessing
 to God, to the Earth and to all humanity. Amen

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.



Facebook
www.facebook.com/ChristianEcologyLink

Twitter
[@greenchristian](https://twitter.com/greenchristian)

Email
info@greenchristian.org.uk

Telephone
0345 459 8460

Post:
10 Kiln Gardens, Hartley Wintney, Hampshire, RG27 8RG

Subscriptions are lower for those completing the Standing Order (SO). 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:

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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:

Boost your donation by 25p of Gift Aid for every £1 you donate. Gift Aid is reclaimed by the charity from the tax you pay for the current tax year. Your address is needed to identify you as a current UK taxpayer. In order to Gift Aid your donation you must tick the box below:

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I am a UK taxpayer and understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year it is my responsibility to pay any difference.

Signature: Date:

Ref No. (Green Christian to complete)

Please notify Green Christian if you want to cancel this declaration, change your name or home address, or no longer pay sufficient tax on your income and/or capital gains.

Key Green Christian events in 2018 – for more details visit www.greenchristian.org.uk.

Green Christian's Annual Retreat: "A Heart for the Earth".
6-8 July 2018, Minsteracres Retreat Centre, Consett, Co Durham, DH8 9RT

You are invited to a weekend with members of Green Christian's Way of Life Community.

What do our hearts ask of us in these extraordinary times? This weekend we will listen. We will encounter the peace which comforts and disturbs, which both welcomes us home and sends us out. So this will be a weekend of attentiveness and resistance. We will walk with Jesus through Philippians 2, His journey of passion and resurrection. All welcome. For further details please contact georgedow@greenchristian.org.uk

Green Christian on the Road day events. A series of regional days exploring Green Christian's ethos and work. Open to all.

London: Sat 3 Feb, 11am – 4.30pm. St Aloysius Church, 20 Phoenix Road, Euston, London NW1 1TA

East Anglia: Spring 2018. Date and venue to be confirmed. Please register your initial interest with Howard Gardner at howardgardner@greenchristian.org.uk or text to 07831 101323.

Derby: Summer 2018, date and venue to be confirmed

South West: Autumn 2018, date and venue to be confirmed.

Please see the website for more details or sign up to our mailing list: <http://www.greenchristian.org.uk/connect/sign-up/>

Annual Members' Meeting Saturday 10 November 2018, 1pm – 5pm. Lower Hall, St Andrew's Church, Short Street, London, SE1 8LJ. Followed by a talk, open to all. 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: 11 groups directly affiliated to Green Christian. 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.

Joy in Enough promotes an alternative economy free from growth, debt and the obligation to consume. Working in co-operation with the Centre for the Understanding of Sustainable Prosperity (CUSP), University of Surrey. www.joyinEnough.org

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

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

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

E-news: regular emails 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 10 Kiln Gardens, Hartley Wintney, Hampshire, RG27 8RG

Green Christian is a registered trading name of Christian Ecology Link. Registered Charity no. 328744, and a Company, reg. no. 2445198, Registered address: 76 Old Eign Hill, Tupsley Hereford HR1 1UA

