

nature

**CLIMATE
JUSTICE**

joy in
enough

hope

Green Christian

**WHY
FAITH MATTERS
AT COP26**



Current national commitments will fail to prevent uncontrollable and irreversible global heating. If the outcome of the COP26 gathering in November 2021 in Glasgow is sufficiently ambitious it could avert climate breakdown, preventing incalculable suffering, massive loss of life and the extinction of innumerable species.

Faith has played an important role in motivating change. Our Christian belief convinces us that change is possible.

This short report focuses on four themes that decision-makers at COP26 need to address: the interconnectedness within nature, the importance of climate justice to protect the vulnerable, the potential for well-being without ever-increasing consumption, and the significance of hope if change is to be achieved.

"We are on the verge of the abyss." UN Secretary-General (2021)

GOD'S EARTH

The complex natural systems that nurture, sustain, and feed us also bring joy, refreshment, and restoration of body and soul.

Christians recognise Creation as a gift from God. It is not ours to exploit, but to be nurtured and safeguarded, thus providing climate and ecological justice, and hope for the future.

"Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."

MATTHEW 6:29



HUMAN BEINGS CANNOT LIVE APART FROM THE NATURAL WORLD

EARTH'S LEADERS

Green Christian urges increased ambition from all nations attending COP26.

The UK Government must take a lead in delivering fair and far-reaching policies for the common good.

THE WORLD CANNOT AFFORD ANY DELAY BY ITS LEADERS



What inspires people to change?
Insights from a Christian perspective.

Nature. Climate Justice. Joy in Enough. Hope.

"As we cease to look at the world through the fog of our own desire to possess, there forms a space of wonder and respect, allowing each creature to exist in itself and for its Creator."

ELIZABETH THEOKRITOFF¹



nature

ALL OF CREATION IS SACRED AND FULL OF WONDER

"We are **part of nature**, not apart from it. There is no future for anyone if COP26 is bad for nature."

BISHOP JAMES JONES²

"For the creation waits with eager longing to be set free from its bondage to decay."

ROMANS 8:19-21

CLIMATE JUSTICE

As the Earth warms, it is the most vulnerable communities, those least responsible for climate chaos, who are most likely to suffer devastating loss and damage.

"Whatever you do for the least of these, you do for me."

MATTHEW 25:40

"Let justice roll on like a river, and righteousness like a never-failing stream."

AMOS 5:24

"To trash the planet is to throw God's gift back in God's face."

PROF TIM GORRINGE³

joy in enough

A photograph of three young boys playing in water. One boy on the left is pouring water from a dark bowl towards the center. A boy in the middle is splashing water over his face with his hands covering his eyes. A boy on the right is pouring water from a container towards the center. The background is a blurred natural setting with trees and rocks.

We long for fairer,
supportive, peaceful and
flourishing communities
living within the Earth's
limits...

"As we abandon fear in favour
of gratitude and praise, we will
be made a joyful people,
unburdened by self-defence
and self-gain."

HANNAH MALCOLM ⁴

"Our Christian story is not about
'the acquisitive society' but
rather about a cooperative
society and the common
good...based not on the
assumption of individual self-
interest, but on living within God-
given limits, on shared human
values and the welfare of all
God's creation."

BISHOP DAVID ATKINSON ⁵

PRAYER IS THE SENSE THAT **HOPE** IS A RESOURCE WE CAN TRULY ACCESS.

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hope

WE DARE TO IMAGINE...

"Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."

HEBREWS 11:1



What do we want?

Nature. Climate Justice. Joy in Enough. Hope.

We urge the UK Government to acknowledge the severity of the climate and nature crisis.

We challenge it to set in motion, with immediate effect, a detailed and practical plan to meet our moral obligations.

SUCH A PLAN MUST ADDRESS...

Nature

...the protection and conservation of nature here *and* overseas, recognising the damage we cause through the goods we consume.

Climate Justice

...our ENTIRE carbon footprint, in the UK and overseas, recognising our historic accountability for greenhouse gas emissions, and our responsibilities towards the most vulnerable.

Joy in Enough

...supporting behavioural change to cut our emissions instead of continuing to pollute and relying on unproven technology.

Hope

...the need for active involvement of ordinary people in decision-making, charting the way forward to a flourishing future.



How do we put this into practice?

Food and Farming. Climate Change. Trade and Consumption. Green Jobs. Transport.

Food & Farming

A close-up photograph of a person's hand gently holding a small, vibrant green seedling with several leaves, growing out of a mound of dark, rich soil. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green, suggesting a natural, outdoor setting. The overall tone is positive and focused on environmental care and agriculture.

The UK must...

...prioritise management of trees, hedgerows, soil and water to sequester carbon, restore wildlife habitats and bring the benefits of nature to everyone.

...ensure production of healthy food and promote less meat consumption.⁶

Why?

Globally, the food system is the biggest single source of anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions.⁷

nature



Climate Change

The UK must...

...share expertise in renewable technologies and behaviour change to facilitate a net-zero future for all, with a restored international aid budget that promotes sustainable development.

Why?

The world is nowhere near being on track for decarbonising in time to prevent climate breakdown.

We are an affluent nation and owe a debt to those communities from whose wealth we have historically benefited.

**CLIMATE
JUSTICE**



The UK must...

...accelerate behavioural strategies, champion sustainable business models that cut our over-consumption, and develop a circular economy.

Green Christian's Joy in Enough programme challenges our current economic systems of trade and consumption.

Why?

We are using resources at a rate that the planet cannot sustain.⁹

Trade & Consumption

**joy in
enough**

Green Jobs

The UK must...

...invest in green jobs that prevent carbon emissions. Decarbonise the energy sector.

...make buildings energy efficient. Reuse, repair and recycle to support the circular economy. Expand public transport and organic agriculture.

Why?

We need to create a sustainable, net-zero economy in which people have jobs that reduce our environmental impacts and restore our damaged natural world.

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"I have plans for your welfare...to give you a future and a hope."

JEREMIAH 29:11

The UK must...

...develop a net-zero transport sector, providing the benefits of improved air quality, quieter streets and better integrated public transport. HGVs and buses must be zero-emission, rail networks electrified and car driving reduced.

Why?

Transport is the UK's biggest single source of greenhouse gas emissions, accounting for 34% of our emissions.¹⁰

The UK Government has budgeted over £27bn on roads,¹¹ funds that need to be spent on improving rail infrastructure and accelerating the transition to electric cars.

Transport



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Hope and determination to achieve a net-zero world for all



What *is* our Government doing?

Food and Farming. Climate Change. Trade and Consumption. Green Jobs. Transport.

"Humanity needs to listen out for the wild patience of God, who creates and sustains the universe, despite the human sin that desecrates the natural world."

FRANKIE WARD¹²

Our Government



Despite its environmental targets, the UK Government is **not on track** to reach its goal of net-zero by 2050.

Meeting the Committee on Climate Change's carbon budgets requires **more than pledges and promises.**

We need Parliament to pass **far more ambitious** policies on food and farming, climate change, trade and consumption, green jobs and transport.



What are churches doing?

Nature. Climate Justice. Joy in Enough. Hope.

WHAT CHURCHES ARE DOING TO STOP CLIMATE BREAKDOWN

- The [Young Christian Climate Network](#) is a community motivated by love for people and God's Creation, putting their faith into action for climate justice.
- [Climate Sunday](#) services are happening throughout 2021 to pray and take action to address the climate crisis.
- Tearfund provides a [Climate Emergency Toolkit](#) - a route map for churches to respond to the climate crisis with simple, powerful actions.

- The [Eco Church](#) programme enables Christians to reduce their church's energy consumption and promote sustainable lifestyles.
- [Operation Noah](#) has spearheaded action to end all church investment in fossil fuel extraction.
- The General Synod of the [Church of England](#) voted that the Church should strive to reach net-zero emissions by 2030.
- The [Laudato Si' Movement](#) is responding to the call from St Francis cited in Laudato Si' to hear "the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor". They are training local leaders.
- [Christian Climate Action](#) carries out acts of public witness and civil disobedience to urge those in power to make the changes needed.



GREATER AMBITION

Our Christian faith motivates, underpins and supports us as we strive to safeguard the future.

We urge our political leaders to grasp the crucial opportunity at COP26 to:

- deliver on their promises,
- push hard for what is necessary to maintain a stable climate,
- protect and conserve nature,
- provide funding for poorer countries to adapt to the climate disruption which we richer, privileged nations have caused.

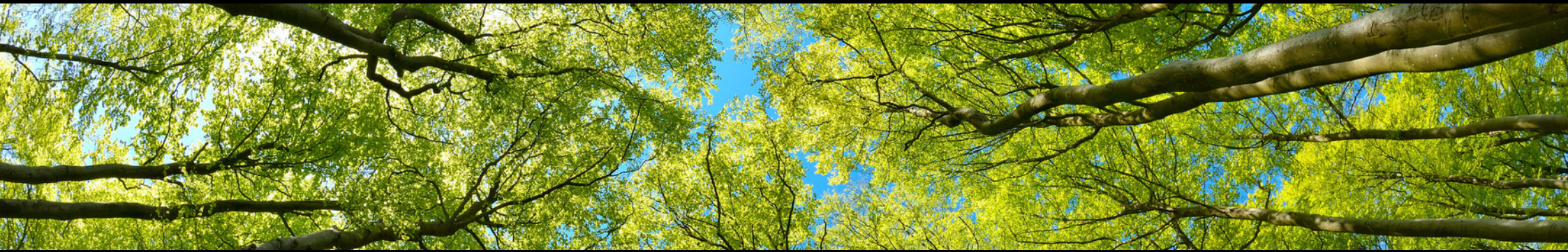
REFERENCES

Green Christian invited reflections on COP26 from faith leaders, theologians and climate activists. Besides those referenced below, other contributions came from Dr Edward Echlin, Melanie Nazareth and Revd Dr Andrew Norman. Each of the reflections can be read in full on the Green Christian website.

1. Bishop James Jones, Bishop of Liverpool (1998-2013), and Green Christian Patron
2. Dr Elizabeth Theokritoff, Institute for Orthodox Christian Studies, Cambridge
3. Prof Tim Gorringer, Emeritus Professor of Theological Studies, University of Exeter
4. Hannah Malcolm, writer, activist and Church of England ordinand
- 5, 6. Bishop David Atkinson, former Bishop of Thetford, environmentalist and author
- 7, 8. Benton, T.G. et al. (2021) Food System Impacts on Biodiversity Loss. Three levers for food system transformation in support of nature, Energy, Environment and Resources Programme, Chatham House
9. WWF (2020) [Living Planet Report](#)
10. Committee on Climate Change (2020) [Sixth Carbon Budget Dataset](#)
11. Transport for Quality of Life (2020) [The Carbon Impact of the National Roads Programme](#)
12. Very Revd Dr Frances Ward, Anglican priest and author
13. Green Christian supports the [Glasgow Action Plan](#)

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HOPE AND DETERMINATION TO ACHIEVE A NET-ZERO WORLD FOR ALL