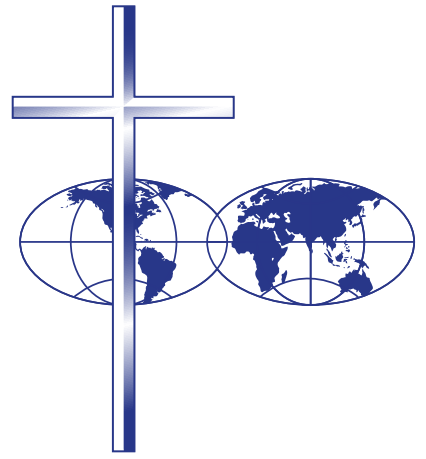
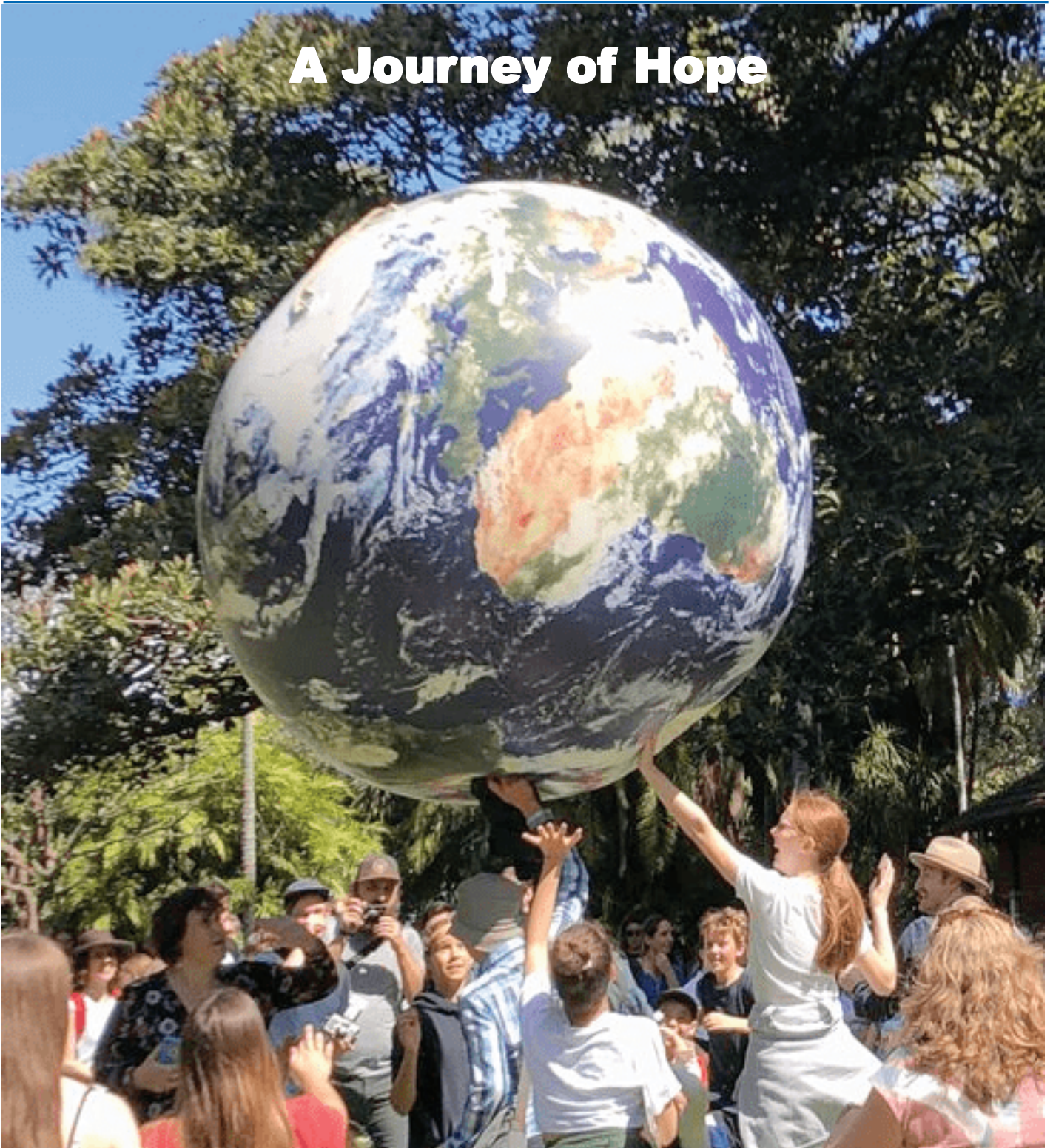


# Vocation *for* Justice



Spring 2020 Volume 34 No 1

## A Journey of Hope



**COLUMBAN MISSION**

Collaborating with the National Justice and Peace Network of England and Wales & Justice and Peace Scotland



The start of a new decade is a time for making resolutions - a time to build practices and actions into our lives which will help tackle the hopelessness that can set in knowing the injustices, violence and environmental degradation happening all over the world. See Ideas in the Centrespread of this newsletter, whose theme is taken from Pope Francis' World Peace Day Message for 2020, encouraging "a Journey of Hope".

In a recent article, journalist John Vidal, a judge in our current Young Journalists Competition, described the last decade as a "Lost Decade", where we awoke to Climate Change only to squander every chance to act. There is a failure of politicians - from US President Donald Trump undoing environmental protections to Australia's Scott Morrison seeking to outlaw climate protests, even in the face of unprecedented bush fires. In the UK, our government still plans an expansion of climate-damaging air travel. There is a failure of the corporate world, especially 20 fossil fuel companies whose relentless exploitation of the world's oil, gas and coal reserves can be directly linked to more than one-third of all greenhouse gas emissions in the modern era. As for the arms companies, around 6% of global greenhouse gas emissions result from military-related activity.

Have our Churches lost this decade too? Certainly, at the fifth anniversaries of both the Paris Agreement and Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'*, we need to speed up the snail's pace towards "ecological conversion". We need to hear more about structural change as well simpler lifestyles. We need fossil fuel disinvestment by more Church groups, part of the rise of institutional shareholder activism. Churches must join the sustainability revolution and demonstrate in liturgies that there is engagement with "the Cry of the Earth and the Cry of the Poor". Well done to the handful of *Livesimply* parishes and schools!

The scientists tell us we have entered the last decade in which we can avert climate catastrophe. November will see the UK hosting a momentous UN climate summit in Glasgow. There is also a major conference in China highlighting

## World Peace Day 2020 Pope Francis

**The Pope's January 2020 World Peace Day message was: 'Peace as a Journey of Hope: Dialogue, Reconciliation and Ecological Conversion'. An extract follows:**

Only by choosing the path of respect can we break the spiral of vengeance and set out on **a journey of hope.....** If a mistaken understanding of our own principles has at times led us to justify mistreating nature, to exercise tyranny over creation, to engage in war, injustice and acts of violence, we believers should acknowledge that by so doing we were not faithful to the treasures of wisdom which we have been called to protect and preserve.

Faced with the consequences of our hostility towards others, our lack of respect for our common home or our abusive exploitation of natural resources - seen only as a source of immediate profit, regardless of local communities, the common good and nature itself - we are in need of an ecological conversion.

The recent Synod on the Pan-Amazon Region moves us to make a pressing renewed call for a peaceful relationship between communities and the land, between present and past, between experience and hope. This journey of reconciliation also calls for listening and contemplation of the world that God has given us as a gift to make our common home. Indeed, natural resources, the many forms of life and the earth itself have been entrusted to us "to till and keep" (Gen 1:15), also for future generations, through the responsible and active participation of everyone. We need to change the way we think and see things, and to become more open to encountering others and accepting the gift of creation, which reflects the beauty and wisdom of its Creator.

The ecological conversion for which we are appealing will lead us to a new way of looking at life, as we consider the generosity of the Creator who has given us the Earth and called us to a share it in joy and moderation. This conversion must be understood in an integral way, as a transformation of how we relate to our sisters and brothers, to other living beings, to creation in all its rich variety and to the Creator who is the origin and source of all life. For Christians, it requires that, "the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them".

diminishing biodiversity. The Columbans will be represented at both. It has never been more important that we stand up for a positive vision of the future.

All this will depend on a broad coalition of people and organisations and it begins in our streets, in our workplaces and in our communities. Columbans support nonviolent civil disobedience, celebrating the actions that Extinction Rebellion, Christian Climate Action and the Fridays for the Future youth movement took in 2019 to make the Climate Emergency a priority issue. Nonviolent direct action for a sustainable and peaceful future is part of the journey of hope. Columban eco-theologian Sean McDonagh has supported the Friday

climate strikes in Ireland. He says, "the Christian Churches, as the midwives of God's reign, must speak the truth about global environmental destruction in a more forthright and unambiguous way". Columban Sr Kate Midgley, found her involvement in last October's Extinction Rebellion events in London "really moving".

If ever there was a time for 2020 vision, it's now. What's your vision and plan for this year, to launch a decade of transformative action - in your own life, in your communities, in your mission? Let's discern how we might deepen our commitment to build a better world where all of God's creation can live in peace and prosperity. And then work together to make this vision a reality. ■

**Ellen Teague**

## 2020: Celebrate and Accelerate Global Catholic Climate Movement

The Global Catholic Climate Movement will celebrate its fifth anniversary in January 2020. And *Laudato Si'*, the Church's first environment encyclical four months later. We've achieved a lot together over the past five years. From the incredible *Laudato Si'* animator support to Catholic institutions becoming the single-largest source of commitments in the global divestment movement, the GCCM network has made great things happen. We're seeing *Laudato Si'* come to life through

- thousands of **prayer services and educational events**
- thousands of **concrete actions to reduce emissions**
- young Catholics leading ***Laudato Si'* Generation**

But the climate catastrophe is relentless. A crisis of this magnitude demands we step up, and step beyond the limits of what has been possible. We hear the Spirit calling us to radical, prophetic love. That's why we're coming together to achieve even more progress in the five years ahead.

We've identified two key moments for 2020, uniting Catholic communities around the *Laudato Si'* vision. They are:

***Laudato Si'* Week** 16-24 May 2020 and the **Season of Creation** (1 September–4 October 2020).

<https://laudatosiweek.org/> and <https://seasonofcreation.org/>

The Season of Creation in Autumn 2019 was celebrated in 680 events in nearly 70 countries, with events held for the first time in the Caribbean, the Middle East, South Sudan, and Myanmar. Church leaders offered new support for the Season, including a high-level joint statement signed by Cardinal Peter Turkson and other prominent Church leaders, and an ecumenical prayer service in Assisi with leaders from across the ecumenical spectrum.



A climate strike at St Columban's, Dalgan Park in Ireland.

## New Conference of Religious Ecology Group

The Conference of Religious, which represents the leaders of religious communities in England and Wales, has set up a new Ecology Group in line with the call to "ecological conversion" in *Laudato Si'*. It aims to help religious congregations step up their response to Climate Change. Days of reflection on *Laudato Si'* are to be held around the country in the Spring and the keynote speakers will be Sr Margaret Atkins OSA, who is based at Boarbank Hall in Cumbria, and Columban eco-theologian Fr Sean McDonagh. Input on practical ways to make changes will be given by Steve Burrowes of the *Laudato Si'* project in Salford diocese and John Paul de Quay of the Ecological Conversion group of Arundel and Brighton Diocese. <https://www.corew.org/news/2019/12/20/humanity-still-has-the-ability-to-work-together-in-building-our-common-home>

## Two Dioceses Divest from Fossil Fuels

The Dioceses of Middlesbrough and Lancaster have announced their commitment to divest from fossil fuels, becoming the first Catholic dioceses in England and Wales to do so. They were joined by two Catholic religious orders - the English Provinces of the Congregation of Jesus and the Presentation Sisters - alongside 16 other local churches and Christian institutions in the UK. The divestment declarations were made to mark the Epiphany and at the start of a key year for climate action globally.

Globally, more than 160 other Catholic institutions - including the Columbans - have already committed to divest from fossil fuels, whose emissions are the main driver of global warming. Faith institutions constitute the greatest number of organisations contributing to the global 'fossil free' movement, which now stands at a total of over \$12 trillion of assets divested globally.

In both Middlesbrough and Lancaster grassroots work over recent years has been a key influence. Last year, Middlesbrough Justice and Peace Commission produced an Environmental Policy for the diocese, which included having an Ethical Investment Policy. Lancaster Faith and Justice Commission has run educational events, supported street protests against fracking and were represented in a CAFOD group at the UN Climate talks in Poland in December 2018.

The next joint initiative, which Churches and Christian organisations of all denominations are invited to join, will be a global divestment announcement for faith institutions in late March 2020. <https://brightnow.org.uk/>



Sr Margaret Atkins



# Pact of the Catacombs

Scott Wright

*Scott Wright is Director of the Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach in Washington. This is an extract of one in a series of Columban articles, 'Synod on the Amazon: Model for the World'. All articles at: <http://columbancenter.org/Synod-on-Amazon-Model-for-World>.*



*Amazonia Synod participants in the Catacombs.*

Early one Sunday morning in October 2019, participants in the Vatican's Synod on the Amazon visited the ancient catacombs of Domitilla on the outskirts of Rome. They celebrated a new 'Pact of the Catacombs for Our Common Home'. They committed themselves to "a Church with an Amazonic face," a poor, servant, prophetic and Samaritan Church.

Fifty years prior, at the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council, another gathering of bishops, mostly from Latin America and led by Archbishop Helder Camara of Recife, Brazil, made a similar pilgrimage to this same site. In the original Pact of the Catacombs they promised to renounce the wealthy trappings of the Church, and urge their governments to work for a new social order based on justice and equality for the poor, what Pope Francis would later call "a poor Church of the poor".

Brazilian Cardinal Claudio Hummes recalled the indigenous and Church martyrs of today, victims of persecution by mining and logging corporations for defending the land and waters of the Amazon. Cardinal Hummes, a Franciscan, is the one who leaned over to tell Pope Francis, immediately after his election, "not

to forget the poor". In a symbolic gesture, he wore the same stole that Archbishop Helder Camara wore 50 years before.

In his homily, Cardinal Hummes recalled the significance of the moment, in a place that "was a refuge of persecuted Christians, of martyrdom," and he spoke of the Synod on the Amazon as an attempt to "search out new paths", "to rediscover the great content of the message of Jesus and to give new life to it in our time". He spoke of "a sense of urgency in the face of aggressions that devastate the territories of the Amazon". In the face of such violence linked to global capitalism, the bishops recognised "that we are not the owners of Mother Earth," an acknowledgment that led them in this new pact to "renew each day the Alliance of God with all of creation".

These words, pronounced in the context of the Synod on the Amazon and in the presence of the ancient martyrs of the Church, take on particular meaning, especially when they are addressed to the transnational mining companies and extractive industries, and the governments that support them, that are destroying the lands and waters,

the rainforests and the air, of the Amazon, forcibly displacing entire communities and targeting environmental activists and indigenous leaders.

What did the bishops say in this new Pact of the Catacombs for Our Common Home? They called on the Church to renew its preferential option for the poor, now represented by indigenous peoples who are called "to be protagonists in society and in the Church". But in order for this truly to happen, we must reject "every kind of colonial mentality and posture," and with it "every form of violence and aggression" against indigenous peoples, their cultural identity, their territories and their forms of life. The bishops committed themselves "to stand with those who are persecuted for their prophetic service of denouncing injustice ... for defending the Earth and the rights of the poor ... and for welcoming and supporting migrants and refugees".

There is a sense of urgency to what is happening in the Amazon, because the life of entire communities, future generations, and Earth itself is at stake, recalling that the Amazon is both a carbon sink, absorbing the destructive consequences of carbon emissions causing climate change, as well as a source of 20 per cent of the world's oxygen. But this is changing. The fires that have devastated large portions of the Amazon are a wake-up call and reminder that the clock on global warming is ticking. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has predicted that 2030 is the tipping point beyond which the consequences of global warming will be disastrous for the planet.

Much of the blame points directly to Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro for encouraging the burning of forests and the seizure of indigenous lands. But big agribusiness companies like JBS and Cargill are also to blame for large-scale deforestation, and wholesale outlets like Costco and Walmart and consumer demand in the U.S. for soy and meat, drives this destructive cycle. The countries of the Northern hemisphere, as major consumers and supporters of extractive industries and agribusiness in the Amazon, owe an "ecological debt" to the poor

countries of the global South. In the words of one Amazonian bishop, "We are all responsible".

After three long and intense weeks, marked by special gatherings of cardinals and indigenous leaders, a Way of the Cross marking the martyrdom of indigenous communities, and an apology on the part of Church leaders for complicity of the Church in the colonial conquest of the Americas, the Synod on the Amazon concluded with a final Mass.

The Synod document committed the Church to a pastoral, cultural and ecological conversion. It represented a commitment from the highest levels of the Catholic Church to become a prophetic Church "with an Amazonian face". The statement speaks of "the suffering of the Amazon," and in a phrase borrowed from Pope Francis' encyclical letter *Laudato Si'*, of the urgency of responding to "the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor." It speaks of the sacrifice of the martyrs, and a commitment to ecumenical and interreligious dialogue, including dialogue and genuine "encounter" with indigenous and Afro-descendant cultures and religions.

The Synod document speaks strongly of the need for justice: "The defence of the land has no other purpose than the defence of life." In specific terms, that means the defence of "human dignity," of "human rights", of the rights of "self-determination," especially for indigenous communities and territories. The right to free, prior and informed consent is their first line of defence against the exploitation of mining companies, extractive industries and governments that ignore these internationally recognised rights.

The heart of the Synod on the Amazon may be found in the expression "Ecological Conversion," by which the bishops mean "just models of development" and solidarity. Such a conversion must not be understood as an "optional" path for the Church going forward, but rather as "the only way possible to save the region from predatory extractive industries, from the shedding of innocent blood, and from the criminalisation of the defenders of the Amazon." ■

## Pax Christi's Path of Peace

### ***The Columbans are members of Pax Christi International, which celebrates 75 years in May.***

The year is 1945. A French bishop is returning home from a detention camp after being arrested by the Gestapo for speaking out against the persecution of Jews. He encounters a laywoman who is trying to make sense of how two peoples, many of whom share a common faith - German and French Catholics - have slaughtered each other by the millions twice now in less than 30 years. Together the bishop and the laywoman build a movement of reconciliation and peace that will spread to every corner of the globe.

That same year, humankind's most violent chapter is devastatingly inaugurated 14,000 kilometers away in Hiroshima, Japan. The atomic age is born in ash and fire, and the bombs dropped by the U.S. on Hiroshima and Nagasaki will signal how, for the first time in history, humanity holds the power of its own total destruction in its hands.

Now, in 2020, Pax Christi International - that movement born 75 years ago with the promise of peace - will gather in Hiroshima in the 75th anniversary year of the first atomic bomb. Under the theme: **REMEMBER, RISE: THE PROMISE OF PEACE**, members and supporters will recount their history and all it has meant while rising up to answer the challenge of peace in our world today and for tomorrow.

Pax Christi International gathers every five years, the last one being in 2015 at Bethlehem in the Holy Land. The 2020 World Gathering, will have a heavy focus on ending, "the nuclear madness that dropped from its skies 75 years ago". The programme includes hearing from atomic bomb survivors and sharing of stories of hope in the context of local work for peace in Asia-Pacific, Europe, Middle East, Africa, Latin America and North America. Participants will pledge anew to work for a world free of nuclear weapons. The final event will see prayers of remembrance, atonement, commitment, and solidarity at the monument to the 'Hibakusha' located in Peace Park, followed by a peace procession to the Atomic Bomb Dome.

The Columbans congratulate the Catholic Church's peace movement for its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Two Columbans based in the Far East will be attending the anniversary event in Japan. One is Korea-based Fr Pat Cunningham who has been involved with the Vatican Non-Violence Initiative. Fr Brian Vale is a member of the Columban General Council, based in Hong Kong.

### **UK News....**

- Look out for the Franz Jagerstatter film 'A Hidden Life'. Franz was executed on 9 August 1943 for his conscientious objection to serving in Hitler's army. On 26 October 2007 he was Beatified in Linz, Austria.
- Ash Wednesday on 26 February will be marked by a peace service at London's Ministry of Defence, with other services in Coventry and Liverpool.

### **Pope calls for Ecocide law**

On 15 November 2019, Pope Francis proposed that 'sins against ecology' be added to Catholic teaching - and then went a step further, saying "ecocide" should be a fifth category of crimes against peace at the international level. The Pope described acts that "can be considered as 'ecocide': the massive contamination of air, land and water resources, the large-scale destruction of flora and fauna, and any action capable of producing an ecological disaster or destroying an ecosystem". He said, "this is a fifth category of crimes against peace, which should be recognised as such by the international community."

Catholic support for ecocide law was welcomed by many. Greenpeace said, "as the international legal and banking systems slowly toy with the idea of making environmental harm some kind of crime/metric of failure, the Pope has decided to get ahead of the game".

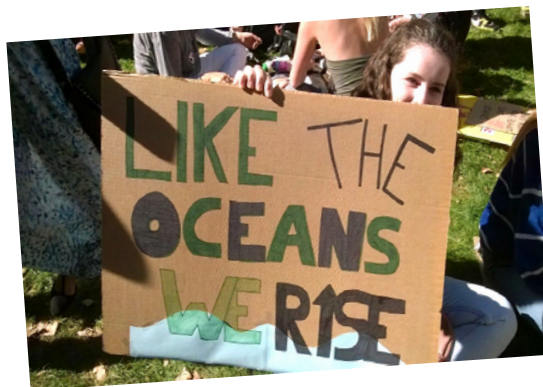


# Resolutions for the New Decade ....

## Don't be indifferent

"To speak one's mind, to challenge injustice, abuse, exploitation, torture and the unlawful taking of life is a serious obligation" according to Columban Shay Cullen. In the face of a global climate emergency, forced migrations, global inequality and violence, we are called to see in the "signs of the time" the seeds of a new future, of ecological conversion, moving forward with hope and courage befitting God's Spirit that will "renew the face of the Earth". The Church as an institution is committed to denounce social injustice globally and in the UK.

<https://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/>



## Get out on the streets

Attend local demonstrations like climate strikes, supporting the younger generation of climate activists. Joining with others who care about these issues reminds us that our voices matter and give an important witness. These include Christian Climate Action, Fridays for the Future, and Extinction Rebellion.

@CclimateAction #FridaysForFuture @GretaThunberg

@XRebellionUK



## Celebrate good news

"Stop being a lemon and make some lemonade in these strained times," a journalist once urged. As well as highlighting structural injustice we must be on the alert for what is lovely and life-affirming around us. The People & Planet University League, for example, has driven massive improvements in environmental management and monitoring by affirming those universities taking responsibility for promoting a more sustainable future.

<https://peopleandplanet.org/> See positive JPIC Catholic news at <https://www.indcatholicnews.com/>

## Make your voice heard

Democracy is an ongoing process and holding the government to account can be done in many more ways than the ballot box. In 2016 Pope Francis called for "prophetic audacity". This will involve speaking out against predatory development projects in the world's hotspots that result in ethnocide and ecocide and the criminalising of social movements. Consider joining an advocacy group for migrant rights, environmental justice, protecting the NHS, conserving local trees, or any other cause you care about. Raise your voice against discrimination.

<https://www.globaljustice.org.uk/>;

<https://londonminingnetwork.org/>

## Invest ethically

Support campaigns for disinvesting from fossil fuels, particularly withdrawing Church investments from extractive companies causing social and ecological damage. And join the call for a radical energy transition and search for alternatives for our common home. The Church is committed to the defence of all life and to opposing the structures of death, sin, violence and injustice. Support companies that pay a living wage. Double-check that investments and banking are environmentally positive and ethical.

<https://brightnow.org.uk/>; <https://www.eirisfoundation.org/>; <https://www.eccr.org.uk/>; <https://www.eccr.org.uk/news/eccr-launches-money-makes-change/>

## Reduce carbon footprints

Regularly measure the climate footprint of individuals and organisations with the goal of reducing carbon footprints. Cycling and walking more will reduce your carbon footprint, along with using public transport.

<https://footprint.wwf.org.uk/#/>

## Be peacemakers

The preamble of the Charter of the United Nations says that the peoples of the UN are determined "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war". Peacemakers strive to create peace, making an active choice for nonviolence as an alternative to both war and passivity. Work with others to actively resist war and other injustices, promote peace education and examination of alternative forms of conflict resolution. Make the links between issues of peace, power, poverty and climate change.

<http://paxchristi.org.uk/>; <http://www.abolishwar.org.uk/>; <https://www.ppu.org.uk/>



### Go green at home.

Turn off electronic appliances when not in use, especially personal computers and games consoles, which use a lot of energy. Make sure the electricity you are supplied is as eco-friendly as possible. Upgrade appliances and lighting to energy efficient options when time to replace. Go back to basics and use natural products to clean your home.

Avoid planning long-distance holidays, especially air travel. In your garden, use peat-free compost. And plant a wildlife-friendly garden, planting more pollinator species using neonicotinoid-free organic seed and giving them to family and friends as presents for birthdays. Reduce mowing and create habitats in your garden. Ditch single-use plastics as much as possible. Use wax wraps and cut down on cling film with reusable food containers and coverings.

<https://friendsoftheearth.uk/plastics>; <https://www.greenpeace.org.uk/challenges/plastic-pollution/>;

### Spend more time in nature.

Spending time in nature - watching wildlife, taking a walk or doing some gardening can have positive benefits for mental health and wellbeing; so you can do good for nature and reap the rewards for yourself. Perhaps incorporating exercise with a volunteering activity. Avoid endless scrolling on Twitter or binge watching Netflix, but actively take time to do something creative or restorative.

<https://arocha.org.uk/wildchristian/>

### Get rooted in your community

Whether this is helping out at a local foodbank, volunteering at church, welcoming refugees, joining a community garden, or making an effort to meet neighbours - giving time to the people is important as we face uncertain times in which we need to pull together as a society. Engage with local politics and dialogue regularly with your MP. Consider working towards the Livesimply Award in your parish.

<https://www.csan.org.uk/>; <https://cafod.org.uk/Campaign/How-to-Campaign/Livesimply-award>

### Pray

Whether it's creating more space in the day for reflection, joining a retreat, or trying a new style of prayer or worship, making room for spiritual nurturing is vital for sustaining our hope and our activism. In the parish, help create liturgies that encompass justice, peace and the integrity of creation.

*Green Christian monthly prayer guide* at <https://greenchristian.org.uk/faith-and-hope/prayer-guide/>; <https://cafod.org.uk/Pray/Prayer-resources/>; @greenfaithworld



LOAF stands for food which is:  
Locally produced, Organically grown, Animal friendly and Fairly traded.

### Support food justice

Small farmers in Africa and across the world are resisting corporate control and instead promoting food sovereignty. Agroecology is a key part of food sovereignty. It is the science of sustainable farming as well as a political movement that aims to improve the way food is grown and processed globally. Fundamentally, agroecology is about shifting the control of the land, seeds, markets and labour out of the hands of big business and back into the hands of small-scale farmers. Use the LOAF principles – food that is **L**ocally produced, **O**rganically grown, **A**nimal-friendly, **F**airly traded.

<https://www.globaljustice.org.uk/campaigns/food>; <http://www.christian-ecology.org.uk/loaf.htm>; <https://www.fairtrade.org.uk/get%20involved/Current-campaigns/Fairtrade-Fortnight>

### Don't waste anything

**REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE.** Minimise food waste and conserve water. Shop second-hand for clothing. The fashion industry emits more carbon than international flights and maritime shipping combined. Support charity shops. <https://friendsoftheearth.uk/food-waste>



***"This coming decade humanity will decide it's future. Let's make it the best one we can. We have to do the impossible. So, let's get started!"***

***Greta Thunberg***

***"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."***

***Margaret Mead***



## Looking Backwards, Looking Forward

**James Trewby**

**James is the JPIC Columban Education worker.**

2019 finished with flurries of activity for Columban Justice and Peace Education. Seeds were planted that will hopefully grow and flourish in the new decade.

In October, the Pope's Extraordinary Mission Month opened lots of doors. A primary school assembly on 'Mission' was well received (and is still available free from [education@columbans.co.uk](mailto:education@columbans.co.uk)). Clergy deanery meetings explored the theme at a deeper level through a discussion paper based on a reflection from Fr Tom O'Reilly SSC. The Columbans collaborated with Birmingham Archdiocese Justice and Peace Commission on a day conference based on the 'see-judge-act' methodology.

Work with young people for the Extraordinary Mission Month had two main strands. A day for young adults, 'Baptised and sent!', concluding with a Mass to celebrate World Mission Sunday, was run collaboratively with the Birmingham diocesan youth, vocations and evangelisation departments. For school students 'The Mission Project' ran first for representatives from multiple schools, but then we were invited to repeat it for one – Columban Faith in Action Volunteer Berlind Fellermeier writes:

*"The Mission Project' was an opportunity for students from John Henry Newman Catholic College to*

*learn, reflect, pray and be inspired to an ongoing commitment to a faith lived in action for justice, peace and mission. To do this, they would first be introduced to Catholic theology around mission, then have a chance to meet missionaries in their mission fields and end with a session of reflection on what they experienced and how they themselves can be missionaries.*

*The first day the students filed into the auditorium, not sure what to expect. It took them a while to warm up to the topic and start to grasp the connection between faith, mission, and caring for others and creation. But throughout the morning as they participated in various activities and prayers the pieces of the puzzle started falling into place.*

*Over the next few weeks groups of students from the school visited various missionaries around Birmingham. These included attending a climate strike, meeting missionary Fr Jim Fleming and visiting a welcome centre for asylum seekers that he volunteers at, chatting with missionary Steph Neville and hearing from her about her work with asylum seekers and refugees, as well as the importance of living in a Christian community; also spending time at the City Hospital Greenhouses, where missionary Sam Ewell works to care for creation. The students were*

*engaged and enjoyed interacting with the various experiences.*

*The final day of the Missionary Project was spent back at the John Henry Newman Catholic College, where the students were challenged to think more about the values and characteristics of mission. As the final pieces of the puzzle were placed in their positions, the students reflected on what they had experienced and thought of concrete ideas on how they can be missionaries in their homes, schools and communities."*

In November, with the support of Danny Sweeney, a previous participant of our Invitation to Mission Programme and now the co-ordinator of Justice and Peace Scotland, we began exploring taking Catholic teachers to Calais to engage with issues around refugees and safe passage. Our pilot visit was with a small group of educators.

To mark National Youth Sunday we were happy to support Million Minutes gather alumni from their 'Celebrating Young People Awards' for a weekend of celebration, formation and networking. This brought together inspirational young people to explore Catholic Social Teaching principles through immersive experiences provided by the Jesuit Refugee Service and Pax Christi. By the end of our time together we'd prayed, learned, protested and written Christmas cards to people in detention centres.

Looking ahead, 2020 looks to be another busy and exciting year! The schools journalism competition is in full swing – deadline Valentine's Day – with the theme of **'Tackling our throwaway culture'**. In collaboration with Columban Inter-Religious Dialogue colleagues and others, we will be involved in a series of events bringing the Pax Christi Icon of Peace to Birmingham. Plans are being made for how we might engage with upcoming climate strikes and the big Climate Change Summit in Glasgow in November. Later this month the Columban 'Invitation to Mission' programme kicks off again, with a group of participants (including teachers and youth workers) exploring the call to mission through prayer, learning visits, reflection and sharing. ■



*Creating a peace banner in Central London with Million Minutes alumni.*



## Climate Crisis prompts Civil Disobedience

**Ruth Jarman**

**Ruth started Christian Climate Action in 2012, which uses nonviolent direct action. Here is her statement for a court appearance in September 2019.**

I am a Christian and a mother. My faith requires me to 'serve and preserve' the Earth; it requires me to respect what God has created; and it requires me to love my neighbour, where that neighbour is just as much an unborn child in Bangladesh as someone next door. And the parable of the Good Samaritan requires me not to be a by-stander to violence. I cannot stand by and watch my government knowingly participating in the wholesale destruction of God's one beautiful Earth and my children's lives without intervening.

I guess I am in court today because of the method I chose for intervention. I need you to know that I have tried everything else.

I first learned about the science of climate change while reading Chemistry at Oxford 35 years ago. I assumed then, like many people do now, that governments would listen to the scientists and act on their recommendations. In my 30s I had a moment of revelation, when the first verse of the Bible – 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the Earth,' brought about a sudden realisation that my faith and my care for the environment were related. From that moment I began to become actively involved in the environmental movement.

I remember going to a Royal Society conference while pregnant with my first child, now at university, and hearing about 'feedbacks' – about how Greenland would start irreversibly melting at 1.7 degrees warming, raising sea levels by 7m, how the Amazon, the 'lungs of the Earth', was expected to dry up at 3 degrees warming. I remember a question from the audience – "surely this would mean curtains". The panel did not disagree. In 2004, while I was a trustee of Green Christian, I co-founded Operation Noah, creating the only UK Christian charity that focuses specifically on climate change. I have campaigned, lobbied, stood for election, spoken out on climate whenever and wherever I could, in schools,



churches, community groups, trying to get the message out – that humanity has a minute window of opportunity to keep the Earth habitable, and that this window will soon be closed. My family life has suffered because of the time and energy I have spent. Perhaps I should have turned off the computer and the news, given my MP some peace – and focused my time instead on my marriage, on bringing up my kids to be resilient to the societal breakdown that awaits them, to maximise the time we have.

One of the few things I campaigned for that actually happened was the 2008 Climate Act. It wasn't enough, but the UK became the first country to make itself legally required to act on the science. It made me proud to be British! For a few years. In 2017, the body set up to advise the Government on sticking to the act was saying this: *"The UK urgently needs new policies to cut greenhouse gas emissions. Parliament has made commitments and the Government has a legal duty to propose policies to meet them. Despite this, no significant new policy plans have been published in the 11 months since the fifth carbon budget was set."*

And then this year the report to Parliament said: *"Since June 2018, Government has delivered only one of 25 critical policies needed to get emissions reductions back on track."* And Lord Deben, Chair of the Committee, has now confirmed that this government has persistently failed in its legal obligations

declaring, *"We can't go on with this ramshackle system ... the system is not fit for purpose, and doesn't begin to face the issues. The whole thing is run by the government like a Dad's Army operation."* Our Government is breaking its own laws on climate as well as failing in its primary duty, to protect the lives of its citizens.

So that is what has brought me to embracing peaceful nonviolent civil disobedience. I cannot *not* do something to stand in the way of the coming destruction. All the ordinary means of shifting society have run out of time. One year ago, Antonio Guterres, the Secretary General of the UN, said: *"Climate change is the defining issue of our time – and we are at a defining moment. We face a direct existential threat...If we do not change course by 2020, we risk missing the point where we can avoid runaway climate change."* Our government has done nothing in response to this warning. Time is running out.

Part of who I am is my need to tell the truth. It is important in the Christian tradition. The Bible is full of prophets preaching uncomfortable truths to their generation. Jesus speaking the truth led to his crucifixion. And it is the key response to the emergency we are in. Politicians, the media, the business community and the NGOs have been lying to themselves and us about the urgency of the crisis. Only if people completely understand the absolute emergency we are in might they be willing to call for and make the economic and societal transformation that is required. For two decades my words were ignored. Two weeks on the streets of London was not ignored. Opinion polls showed concern about the environment at the highest levels on record and the Shadow Chancellor stated that the Extinction Rebellion led directly to Parliament's declaration of an environment and climate emergency.

I believe we are called to be faithful, not successful. Should the rebellion not 'work' and we fail to stop climate, ecological and civilization meltdown, I believe that peacefully standing against the criminal negligence of our Government is still the only moral and truthful choice in this time of extinction. ■

## Schools Journalism Competition

The third Columban Schools Journalism competition, **'Tackling our Throwaway Culture'** closes on 14 February. Thank you to all the young people participating. Get entries in quick if you have not already done so. See:

[www.columbancompetition.com](http://www.columbancompetition.com)

## Columban Mission in UK

In 2020, the Columban Mission Appeals Team will be visiting parishes in the Dioceses of Arundel & Brighton and Hexham & Newcastle.

Fr Jim Fleming and Ellen Teague are leading a **Catholic People's Week** event at Hinsley Hall, Leeds 15-16 February. The speaker for the annual CPW Dora Turbin Lecture is David McLoughlin, Emeritus Fellow of Christian Theology at Newman University, Birmingham. His lecture will consider 'The Challenge of Prophetic Imagination in 2020'. Bookings at <https://catholicpeoplesweeks.org/events/2020/winter-weekend>

## Columban Climate Education 'Climate Change, Where are we now?'

was the title of a one-day conference in Ireland held by the Columbans at their Dalgan centre on 30 November 2019. Sean McDonagh was a key organiser and key speakers were: John Sweeney, a Nobel prize winner and lecturer at St Patrick's College Maynooth, Lorna Gold of the Irish development Agency Trocaire, and John Gibbons from the Irish Times newspaper. It was the third in a series of conferences responding to the challenges presented in 'Laudato Si'. All the conferences have been attended by over 65 people, many of whom travelled from across the country, along with Columban Sisters and Columbans in the Region. Lorna Gold pointed out that Pope Francis urges a new paradigm for the way we live and for economics. The emergence of the Climate Change Movement, Extinction Rebellion groups, local climate change groups across the country and parish eco-faith groups are all calling for this shift.

## Australian bishops support Climate Change Bill

The Catholic Bishops of Australia announced in mid-January that they would support a proposed Bill on a National Framework for Adaptation

and Action on climate change. During months of wildfires the bishops had focused primarily on charitable response to victims and prayers of solidarity.

## Go Green Week 2020

The youth campaign People and Planet will be focusing on climate colonialism 10-14 February. Through investments, lack of ethical criteria in accepting sponsorship, career fairs, honorary degrees, hostile immigration policies and purchase of goods made in sweatshops, the campaign says our universities are complicit in a colonial system responsible for the climate crisis. <https://peopleandplanet.org/go-green-week-2020>

## Scientists endorse mass civil disobedience for climate action

Last October almost 400 scientists endorsed a civil disobedience campaign aimed at forcing governments to take rapid action to tackle climate change, warning that failure could inflict "incalculable human suffering". In a joint declaration, climate scientists, physicists, biologists, engineers and others from at least 20 countries broke with the caution traditionally associated with academia to side with peaceful protesters courting arrest around the world with Extinction Rebellion. The group said more than half the signatories of the declaration are experts in climate science and the loss of wildlife.

## Climate crisis causes disasters

Climate breakdown played a key role in at least 15 huge disasters last year. Christian Aid pointed to floods in Argentina and Uruguay in January 2019 that forced 11,000 people from their homes. Cyclone Idai killed 1,300 people in Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Malawi in March, and Cyclone Fani struck India and Bangladesh in May and June. A stronger than usual monsoon killed 1,900 people in India.

## Fridays for the Future

Fridays for Future now estimates that more than 9.6 million strikers in 261 countries have participated in climate strikes. And founder Greta Thunberg has met with hundreds of communities and numerous heads of state. 2019 also saw indigenous-led resistance to climate change and the related oil, gas, fracking,

hydro and other natural resource extraction too.

## Columban Advocacy in the U.S.

On 3 January 2020 the Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach in Washington signed a Faith Statement on Escalating Violence with Iran. It said: 'As people of faith, we condemn the United States' dangerous aggression towards Iran, including the assassination of Gen. Qassem Soleimani and the deployment of additional troops to the region. We urge the Administration to step back from the brink of war. Our faith communities see the futility of war, and its power to dehumanise.... The U.S. Congress must act to reassert its war powers by refusing authorisation for war with Iran and related attacks, and to block funding for war with Iran. As communities of faith, we renounce the escalation of violence.'

On 8 December 2019, Columbans, Maryknolls and other missionaries marked the first anniversary of the death of seven-year-old Jakelin Caal Maquin of Guatemala, the first migrant child to die in U.S. custody in over a decade. She was among seven migrant children to die in custody during the past year. Five of them were indigenous Maya. Faith-based and immigrant advocacy groups drew attention once again to the inhumane and unjust systems that allowed for the deaths of these children and the lack of investigation into their deaths that has followed. They prayed for the development of a just immigration system that protects the vulnerable. "God holds the lives of these children dear," said a spokesperson from Sojourners, a Christian magazine, "and God will hold us accountable for how we treat children and their families."

## St Oscar Romero - 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his martyrdom

A Mass and reception will be held at Southwark Cathedral on 21 March at 12.30. The main celebrant and preacher will be Archbishop John Wilson. The Cathedral hosts the Romero shrine in its Romero Chapel. St Martin in the Fields, London, will host a National Ecumenical Romero service on Saturday 28 March at 11am. An all-day pilgrimage 'Romero 40 Years On' will be held at Lindisfarne, Holy Island on Saturday 4 April. *Details of events and resources:* [www.romerotrust.org.uk](http://www.romerotrust.org.uk)



# Action Ideas

## Prepare to lobby Glasgow Climate Summit

The focus of environmental politics this year will almost certainly be the two-week COP26 UN Climate Summit in Glasgow in November. It is a vital meeting as it will be five years since the Paris Agreement, and governments will be asked to submit their revised plans for carbon emissions cuts. Thousands of world leaders, diplomats, and business figures will gather and non-governmental organisations will be there too, and religious groups. In Paris, in 2015, a Columban delegation joined a huge Catholic lobby from around the world to present a petition of nearly two million signatures of people of faith urging an agreement. Christina Figueres, the UN's Climate lead in Paris, acknowledged the key role faith groups had played in securing that deal. But it is still to be fully implemented. Look out for advocacy plans with CAFOD, SCIAF and Scotland Justice and Peace.

An important campaign – particularly by Global Witness and Friends of the Earth Scotland – is to stop lobbyists from fossil fuel companies taking a place at the negotiating table during COP26. Previous summits have been partly bankrolled by sponsorship deals with energy companies. Fossil fuel lobbyists are incredibly powerful in the COP process. They have immense influence over governments' negotiating positions and national policies.

<https://corporateeurope.org/en/2019/12/corporate-cop25-biggest-failure-so-far>



Cartoon by Polyp for the DVD 'Conflict and Climate Change'.



## Come to the NJPN Conference - '2020 Vision: Action for Life on Earth'

The 42<sup>nd</sup> annual conference of the National Justice and Peace Network will take place 17-19 July 2020 in Derbyshire. Bookings are now open and all are welcome. NJPN says: "Five years on from *Laudato Si'* we are learning that ecological conversion is a matter of life and death. Decisions at United Nations summits in 2020 on both climate and biodiversity will be critical for salvaging a viable future. Join us in Conference 2020 as we make common cause to face the choices, changes and consequences confronting us." A keynote speaker is climate campaigner and author Lorna Gold. Liturgy will be led by Marty Haugen, liturgical composer and pastoral musician. Bishop John Arnold of Salford, the lead bishop on the environment for the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, will be the conference Mass celebrant. Christine Allen, Director of CAFOD, will chair. More than 20 stalls will be available in the Just Fair, including a Columban one.

<https://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/conference/>

## Sustainable Food v Genetically Modified Food

After Brexit, the UK's withdrawal agreement is likely to lead us to following EU rules on GM in food and farming until the end of 2020, but after that things could change drastically. Prime Minister Boris Johnson has spoken widely about his desire to "liberate" the UK from GM regulations and many concerns have been raised about the way that GM and other EU food safety regulations are being transferred into UK law.

GM Freeze published a Manifesto for a responsible, fair and sustainable food system ahead of the 2019 General Election. Download and send a copy to your new MP. <https://www.gmfreeze.org/publications/gm-freeze-general-election-2019-manifesto/>

## Concern for plight of child refugees on UK borders

Church groups have condemned the prevention of unaccompanied child refugees being reunited with families in the UK. It follows the 8 January Commons' vote which rejected proposals to keep protections for child refugees in the redrafted EU withdrawal agreement bill. The government reneged on a pledge which had previously been accepted by Theresa May's government. In a joint statement, Westminster Justice and Peace Commission, Seeking Sanctuary, and People Not Walls, criticised scrapping the commitment. They said, "over the last few years all three of our organisations have worked with families and children, who have lived in appalling conditions in Northern France, many feeling forced into illegal methods of reaching safety in the UK". They called for migrants on our borders to be given, "respect for their human rights, especially the right to seek asylum". They urged the UK Government to reinstate its promise to negotiate with the EU the plight of young asylum seekers across Europe. "Welcoming the stranger remains our central commitment" said the three organisations, "and especially the young and most vulnerable". Barbara Kentish, interim coordinator of People not Walls, said, "we call on all Churches, faith communities and people of goodwill to stand up for the rights of these children and young people who have already experienced enough trauma in their young lives". <https://seekingsanctuary.weebly.com/>

**See our Columban video – filmed in Dover on World Refugee Day 2019** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fy95JZ68AKk>

# Resources

## **Climate Generation: Awakening to Our Children's Future**

**Lorna Gold**

Dr Gold - a speaker at the July 2020 NJPN Conference - addresses the harsh reality of climate change but wraps the message in humanity and practical ways forward. She highlights stories of people who are doing amazing things to tackle the climate crisis.

ISBN-13: 978-1847308412

## **Time to Act - Christians in Extinction Rebellion**

**Jeremy Williams**

Christian Climate Action involves Christians committed to prayerful direct action and public witness in response to climate breakdown. There are short essays on the biblical and theological basis for Christian action and stories of people engaged in protests.

ISBN-13: 9780281084463

<https://christianclimateaction.org/>  
Jeremy Williams blog at: <https://earthbound.report/about/>

## **Green New Deal**

**New Economics Foundation**

The UK needs a more just economy and more ambitious plans for climate action. The Green New Deal addresses economic, social and environmental crises together.

<https://neweconomics.org/2019/04/agreen-new-deal>

## **Doughnut Economics**

**Kate Rayworth**

Offers a new economic model - one that embeds the human economy within the natural world and within society, rather than being distinct from either. Consequently, there is an urgent need for a radical restructuring of the economy, reorienting its aims and priorities.

ISBN-13: 978-1847941398

## **Grassroots Rising:**

**A Call to Action on Climate, Farming, Food, and a Green New Deal,**

**Ronnie Cummins**

Cummins calls for the transformation of our food system. Using regenerative agriculture

practices that restore our agricultural and grazing lands, we can sequester massive amounts of carbon in the soil. Coupled with a speedy transition toward renewables, he argues that we could not only slow down global warming, but actually reverse it.  
ISBN: 9781603589758

## **Thomas Berry - A biography Mary Evelyn Tucker, John Grim and Andrew Angyal Columbia University Press**

US Passionist priest and eco-theologian Thomas Berry urged humans to recognise their place on a planet with complex ecosystems in a vast, evolving universe. Three of his friends have combined their knowledge and talents to create a comprehensive story of this man's remarkable life and legacy. Berry sought to replace the modern alienation from nature with a sense of intimacy and responsibility. He predicted that our institutions would not be up to the task of this Great Transition. And we see this in the inadequate response of government, economics, education, and religion. However, he felt the Great Work is to break through to new forms of ecopolitics, ecoeconomics, ecoeducation, ecospirituality.

## **No is not enough**

**Naomi Klein**

Klein suggests that the disorientation we're feeling is deliberate. That around the world, shock political tactics are being used to generate crisis after crisis, designed to force through policies that destroy people, the environment, the economy and our security.

ISBN-10: 0241320887

## **Creation and the Cross: The Mercy of God for a Planet in Peril**

**Elizabeth A. Johnson**

How can we extend the Christian belief in salvation to include all created beings? Johnson invites us to consider what cosmic redemption might mean in our own time?

ISBN-10: 162698266X

## FOR LENT

### **DVD - Stations of the Forests Columban JPIC**

An audio-visual lamenting devastation of rainforests and tribal people. A Resource Booklet provides agendas and reflections for meetings.  
£7.00 inclusive of p&p from 020 8202 2555

Or download from <http://www.columbans.co.uk/resources/dvd-video/stations-of-the-rainforests/>

### **Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns' 2020 Lenten Reflection Guide**

Available at <http://bit.ly/2020LentGuideMOGC>

### **Combined Creation Time and Lent Resource**

**Liverpool Archdiocese / CAFOD**

<https://jp.liverpoolcatholic.org.uk/combined-creation-time-and-lenten-resources/> Hard copies at: <http://www.liverpoolcatholic.org.uk/formation-shop>

### **Global Caring**

**Bishops of England and Wales**

The second film-based programme for parishes and groups, after *Global Healing*. Offers film clips, posters, leader's guide - all available as free downloads. <https://www.ourcommonhome.co.uk/>

### **Nothing more nothing less Virginia Moffatt**

A five-week Lent course which uses the Ken Loach film *I, Daniel Blake*, as an opportunity for us to question why so many people in our society are suffering and responses.  
<http://dltbooks.com/titles/2221-9780232533446-nothing-more-and-nothing-less>

### **Saying Yes to Life Lent Book 2020**

**Ruth Valerio**

Draws on the Days of Creation, relating themes of light, water, land, seasons, other creatures, humankind, Sabbath and resurrection hope to environmental, ethical and social concerns.

ISBN-13: 9780281083770

## VOCATION FOR JUSTICE

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