

SUMMER 2021

CLIMATE ACTION EDITION

01-12 NOV 2021

GLASGOW

COP26



**Rise to  
the Moment**

In this special edition:

- Glasgow Churches Together COP26 Ambassador Rev Dr Martin Johnstone
- Eco Chaplain Rev David Coleman
- Young Christian Climate Network's Liz Marsh
- Local churches' eco action – tips and strategies
- And much more ....

## A STATEMENT FROM THE REV DR MARTIN JOHNSTONE, GLASGOW CHURCHES TOGETHER COP26 AMBASSADOR



This November world leaders will gather in Glasgow for COP26. They will make decisions about the future of the planet. Or to be more accurate, whether our planet has a future. COP26, happening in a city near you from the 1st – 12th November, has been described as our last, best chance to save the planet. As such, it is far too important, to be left to world leaders. COP26 is the 26th meeting of the Conference of the Parties. They first gathered in 1994 to sign the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Glasgow matters because agreement is being sought not about whether we should be doing anything to tackle climate change – that argument has long since been won. They are gathering to seek to agree how we will do so. Under ‘normal’ circumstances, hundreds of thousands of people – perhaps a million plus – would have been

descending on the streets of Glasgow to call out for justice and for action. With COVID19 still shaping much of our lives, we are not living in normal times. But thousands are still likely to come. And Christians, who believe in God the Maker of heaven and earth, must be among them. Glasgow Churches Together, in collaboration with a glorious array of climate justice organisations, international development agencies and passionate individuals are calling for us to get involved in three inter-related ways.

First, demonstrate hospitality. Christ comes to us in the stranger’s guise (Matthew 25). Hotel rooms and accommodation will be at a premium this November, costing thousands of pounds. As such they will make it impossible for some of people who most need to be in Glasgow to be here. Human Hotel <https://www.humanhotel.com/cop26/> hosted by Stop Climate Chaos Scotland, have set up an opportunity for us to host the fantastic people coming to COP26 in our homes this November. If you have travelled thousands of miles to be in Glasgow, Edinburgh is not that far away! This is our chance to stand together and stay together.

Second, we can pray, and pray without ceasing. In the run up to COP26, can we commit individually, as churches, and as churches together to pray passionately and regularly for those coming as official delegates this November? Let us pray for all the preparations, and for a full implementation of any agreements that are reached. In addition, Churches Together in Britain & Ireland are calling on thousands of churches in every part of our nations to sign up for Climate Sunday (5th September) this year. This includes a service of worship as the final steps towards COP26 are being made, with lots of resources available online.

Third, we must act. There is a myriad of different ways in which we can get involved and our wonderful environmental charities such as Eco-Congregation Scotland and international development agencies such as Christian Aid, SCIAF and Tearfund can offer lots of suggestions. If your church has not yet considered becoming an eco-congregation, do so now at <https://www.ecocongregationscotland.org/> And if you already are, let us re-double our efforts to make the biggest possible difference that we can. Change needs to happen in our personal lives, in the life of our churches and in our nation’s life. It also needs to happen across the world. Climate change is having the most devastating impact on the poorest and most marginalised. There are parts of sub-Saharan African where the rain has stopped, and nothing can grow; Pacific islands where rising sea levels are destroying civilisations. This is the reality that needs to be told this November, and the

churches in global solidarity with people in every part of the world are uniquely placed to ensure that story is told. There is a desperate need to ensure that the poorest are treated justly; that the rich nations of the world pay for the just transition to a globally sustainable future. We need to be putting maximum pressure on our governments for adequate – no generous – funds to address the damage already done and to pay for the changes needed to adapt to a more sustainable future.

2020 was the year in which the world stopped. Let us strive with every sinew of our being to ensure that 2021 is when it starts again but goes in a very different direction. The work will not stop when COP26 comes to an end. It is when it really begins.

You can follow Martin on his website <http://www.attheedge.co.uk/> and on Twitter @MartinAtTheEdge

## **YOUNG CHRISTIAN CLIMATE NETWORK by ELIZABETH MARSH**

# **RELAY TO COP26**

Young Christian Climate Network is an ecumenical network of young people aged 18-30 from all around the UK, who are passionate about issues of climate justice and creation care. We are action-focused, with a particular emphasis on community, conviction and loving Jesus. With COP26 coming up this November, knowing that this might be a decade-defining opportunity to take a stand, we wanted to find a way to demonstrate our passion for climate justice and raise awareness of the importance of Christians engaging in creation care theology, both as individuals and also in our communities. We've also been inspired by the ancient Christian tradition of pilgrimage as well as the long history of Christian activism for environmental and justice causes, exemplified by the 2015 Pilgrimage to Paris and the Jubilee Debt Campaign.

Drawing upon these inspirations, we have organised a relay that will start at the G7 summit in Cornwall this June and end at COP26 in Glasgow in November. We are calling upon the UK Government to do the following:

1. Reinstate the foreign aid budget to 0.7%.
2. Secure agreement from rich countries to double their annual commitment for climate Finance.
3. Collaborate with other governments and international organisations to develop a new regulated climate loss and damage mechanism which not only saves lives but livelihoods.
4. Push for the debts of the world's poorest countries to be cancelled so they can better confront the climate crisis and other urgent priorities.

We will also have a boat (not full sized!) journeying with us along the route as a symbol of our hope for a future of greater climate justice. The sails will be a patchwork of contributions from not only across the UK but around the world, showing how the climate crisis has affected different communities. The walk has been divided up into stages and walkers can walk as little as a single day or over a week, according to their ability and preferences. Though YCCN is an organisation run by young people, we are not exclusively for young people, and welcome participants and volunteers of every age. If you would like to join the relay as a walker, or want to volunteer in any other capacity, visit [www.yccn.uk](http://www.yccn.uk) for details and signup.

Along the way, the relay will make stops of a few days in nine of the UK's major cities, where we will be holding 'residencies' to promote the relay and the cause of climate justice, and encourage the local community to get involved. The relay will arrive in Edinburgh on 20th October, before leaving for the final leg to Glasgow on 24th October, meaning that the residency here will run from 21st -23rd October. I have recently taken on the role of Residency Hub Team Leader for Edinburgh, which means I will be working to organise and co-ordinate events over the course of the weekend that the relay is in the city. I am currently working to secure a venue for the residency and then hope to begin organising events that will draw people in and celebrate the cause of climate justice. Please contact me, Liz Marsh, Residency Hub Team Leader for Edinburgh at [ehr.marsh@gmail.com](mailto:ehr.marsh@gmail.com) for more information or to get involved. Our hope at YCCN is that the relay is something that everyone can be a part of, not just people. More information and sign-ups for various voluntary roles relating to the relay are also available at [www.yccn.uk](http://www.yccn.uk)

## **FIGHTING CLIMATE CHANGE – CHURCHES IN ACTION**

'As an Eco-Congregation church since 2007, Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Lauriston has endeavoured to observe both the ethical principles and the practical measures promoted by this affiliation. Our structural complex comprises three large buildings, the church itself, the hall and the Jesuit community residence. Many practical adaptations aimed at reducing our carbon footprint were introduced in subsequent. These include energy-saving lights, improved insulation and extensive use of timers for both lights and heating. We have yet to change from our present boilers to an eco-friendlier heating system but this, along with the introduction of solar panels, was on the to-do list before the pandemic arrived. One area where we have been very conscientious is re-cycling. This is especially important when the hall is in use for large catered events. Like most churches, we have stressed the small and consistent actions which lead to good green habits, for example the collection of used batteries, the use of recycled paper wherever possible, minimal waste, etc. And like most churches we have tried to keep our congregation aware of the urgency of climate change and other ecological issues. The moral/ethical dimension is relatively easy to underscore in a Catholic parish, since, apart from Scriptural guidance we also have many recent Church pronouncements: environmental responsibility is an integral part of Catholic Social Teaching. Our parish Justice and Peace group and Green group have combined to form a single body. We work closely with SCIAF and Fairtrade, constantly aware of how our habits of production and consumption affect the developing world. The Society of St Vincent de Paul normally assists those in need, but it also sponsors nature-learning activities for our young people. The parish arranges praying-with-nature walks to foster a deeper union with both creation and creation's God and parish sponsored retreats based on the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius build on these themes. The coming COP26 event is being promoted in many of our parishes through Jesuit Missions and readers might like to check out <https://jesuitmissions.org.uk/climatechange/> for more information on that. Meanwhile we have just finished celebrating the 6th anniversary of the encyclical *Laudato si'*. In this document Pope Francis comprehensively addresses environmental issues and their links to a global economy and issues of justice. It has taken a while to get these concepts into general circulation among the faithful, but much progress has been made in the last years and we hope that COP26 will galvanise us into some post-covid action. '

FR WILLIAM PEARSALL SR

‘At Mayfield Salisbury, the ecogroup meets about once a month and shares information (e.g., upcoming television programmes, website, books worth reading) on a What's App. Amongst other things, over recent months we have done a substantial survey of energy use at Mayfield Salisbury and are encouraging a reduction in personal carbon footprint, e.g., by publishing "ecotips" each week in the pew leaflets, in the church magazine and on the outside notice board. Our young folk have been encouraged to look at brands of chocolate with respect to packaging (particularly at Easter) and palm oil. Before lockdown we had a very successful day with speakers and workshops. Plenty to discuss here too at <https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20200305-why-your-internet-habits-are-not-as-clean-as-you-think> ‘

MARJORY GRANT

‘BRONZE, SILVER or GOLD, but mostly GREEN - Getting an EcoCongregation Award

At St.Columba's-by-the-Castle Episcopal Church on Johnston Terrace we started preparing our application to Eco-Congregations Scotland in 2016. We engaged as many members as possible in the work, particularly in the area of creating an Ecological Policy, which would serve to underpin future decisions about the building, worship, purchasing and outdoor space. There were a few major actions which we implemented before we felt that we had a viable application:

- Replacing defunct lighting with new fittings and LED reducing energy used by half
- Joining the Quiet Garden Movement and make our terrace-garden ready for visitors to relax in. We compost and never buy peat products. We plant insect-friendly plants.
- Embedding a Green page in our church magazine
- Establishing a 5-week creation Season in our liturgical year
- Weaving Green spirituality into sermons, intercessions, hymn selection, children's' activities, regular talks **all year-round** so it has become integral to our thinking.

A few words about transport – being a city-centre church with **no** allocated parking and usually a shortage of street parking due to coaches, we have been a congregation who are used to coming to church by several means. Cyclists arrive from as far as Trinity or Liberton. Some walk, some come by bus from Craiglockhart, Leith and so on. There are some regular “car-share” arrangements.

We were quite confident of getting a Bronze Award but, following our Eco congregation interview, we were delighted that they found us worthy of Silver! It isn't difficult! The panel commended us on our communications and discussions and our desire to be involved in local issues.

Since 2017, we have developed some of these practices and, following a comprehensive survey, have now drawn a new list of green objectives for 2020-2023. So far, we have hosted a very successful series of online webinars on climate-change, delving deep into the issues from across a range of academic fields such as theology, economics, social psychology and engineering. Our Quiet Garden is moving into partnership with the Grassmarket Community Project as a place where members can learn and enjoy gardening skills.

Another plank of our next application will concern our use of church funds and their environmental impact. We hope this will not be merely a case of divestment but something more dynamic, using them for positive impact. Next year we will start investigating solar panels. But before that, we are committed to supporting campaigns and prayers linked to COP 26. We have registered our desire to help with the accommodation of activists. It's all go! ‘

JENNY PATON-WILLIAMS

'At the Quaker Meeting House, we have installed double-glazing to all the windows of both of our largest rooms. We moved to a green energy supplier. We recycle a wide range of waste products using a local Waste Management company. Before lockdown, we had commenced a 'Green Challenge' which was intended to provide a focus for improving our practice in various aspects of sustainability, e.g., reducing single-use plastic in catering, and auditing our use of palm oil and considering whether we should reduce it. As part of our Quinquennial Review, we had a heat-map survey of the building done, showing where insulation/draughtproofing could be improved. During the past year we have replaced light fittings in 3 rooms with LED fittings during lockdown; we had some sash windows repaired, including adding draughtproofing. Plans for the future: Improving our building's insulation and heating efficiency has been on the agenda for a while - lockdown and closure of the building has interrupted this, but it will be returning to our attention in due course.'

SUE PROUDLOVE

## GET INVOLVED IN THE JOURNEY TO COP 26

There are a number of ways in which congregations, individuals and communities can get involved from now until COP26 in Glasgow. The websites listed below will give you an idea of some of the possibilities:



Interfaith Scotland Resource for Faith Communities –

<https://interfaithscotland.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Briefing-for-Faith-Communities-and-Actions-for-COP26-updated-24-May-21.pdf>

Scottish Religious Leaders Forum – Statement of Commitment –

<https://interfaithscotland.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Religious-Leaders-statement-of-commitment.pdf>



Scottish Interfaith Week will coincide with COP26 – learn what is on and bring news of events

<https://scottishinterfaithweek.org/>



From Dunbar to Glasgow – a pilgrimage to COP26  
<https://artandecology.earth/pilgrimage-for-cop26/>



A time of Pilgrimage – Camino to COP26  
<https://caminotocop.com/>



Climate Assembly UK – The Path to Net Zero  
<https://www.climateassembly.uk/>



Action by Faith Communities to make COP count  
<http://makecopcount.org/>

## LAST WORD FROM ECO-CHAPLAIN REV DAVID COLEMAN



<https://youtu.be/tOUdv51-zhw>

I seem to spend a lot of time reminding people that COP isn't just another Commonwealth Games: it's more global, more vital than that. But one way or another, it's going ahead, and it's definitely an opportunity for people of faith to reflect, to celebrate, to support and to protest in the open ears of power. And to change. And to recycle/repurpose. Everything. Especially the Church. There's far more going on than anyone is individually aware of, and lots of quite positive and nourishing collaboration between people of goodwill from many backgrounds.

Still confused by COP 26? The best available crib is that provided and periodically updated by our very own and treasured volunteer Adrian Shaw, former Climate Change Officer with the Church of Scotland:

[https://www.ecocongregationscotland.org/sdm\\_downloads/cop26-brief-march-2021/](https://www.ecocongregationscotland.org/sdm_downloads/cop26-brief-march-2021/)

(But if you're still baffled, don't worry. So is everyone!)

Although the UK and Scottish governments for now continue their commitment to making further fossil fuel exploration financially viable, Alok Sharma, the UK government's nominated president of COP has graciously reached out to faith groups, inviting them to share in a recent meeting, the insights and treasures of our traditions.

There are other, high-level confidential meetings taking place with leaders and governments. The Vatican and the World Council of Churches have long been involved in COP. The Pope is thinking of turning up to a damp Glasgow in November too!

The symbols of Glasgow's city crest give us plenty of pause for thought: fish from the oceans, birds from the air, tree from the forests and the earth - and the clanky bell of a Celtic saint to ring and make a nuisance with: to call out injustice and drive out evil. I'm leaving bells with every church I visit. Have fun and be loud in your commitment!

Let's make Edinburgh a city of eco-congregations! Register your congregation and start your journey: <https://www.ecocongregationscotland.org/>





*‘The only way to reduce the impact of climate change on the most vulnerable is to move rapidly from fossil fuels to renewables. It is no longer moral to make a profit out of the misery of others. Churches made a profit out of slavery, and could do so because they did not see the face of human suffering on the other side of the world. We can see and do know of the suffering caused by fossil fuels. We need to show that it is no longer moral to make a profit out of the misery of others. In the words of William Wilberforce:*

*“You may choose to look the other way but you can never say again that you did not know.”*

Rev Dr Rachel Mash  
Environmental Coordinator of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa

**A BIG THANK YOU TO ALL OUR CONTRIBUTORS FOR THIS SPECIAL EDITION.**

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