

## Available Resources

There are many resources freely available to download from the Transition Towns website at [www.transitiontowns.org](http://www.transitiontowns.org)

These include presentation material which could be used in churches.

Excellent books on Transition Towns include:

*The Transition Handbook* by Rob Hopkins, the founder of the movement. This book provides the background to the movement, the environmental challenges which we are all facing and the steps to be taken to launch a Transition Town.

*The Transition Timeline*, Shaun Chamberlin, builds on *The Transition Handbook* and provides ideas and creative thinking tools to help communities realise the full potential of how the concept can work in their own localities.

CEL has an interactive web page at <http://christian-ecology.ning.com/> where members can share Transition (and other) ideas and experiences in a discussion group.

It is planned to provide speakers on CiT at events such as Greenbelt.

CEL offers insights into ecology and the environment to Christian people and churches. Activities include: publication of a

magazine - *Green Christian*, leaflets and a Daily Prayer Guide, arranging Conferences and Workshops, Retreats, Local Groups etc. CEL is a member of the Stop Climate Chaos coalition.

Especially useful is the **CEL ecocell programme**. Contact CEL (Tony Emerson 020 8769 4078) to find out how to set up an ecocell in your neighbourhood.

All you need is on CEL's website at [www.christian-ecology.org.uk/ecocell.htm](http://www.christian-ecology.org.uk/ecocell.htm) There you will find: information, ready-to-print hand outs, fact sheets, biblical reflections, measuring sheets.

Other Christian organisations which focus on the care of earth include:

**Eco-congregation**, providing resources to enable churches to become 'greener' in such areas as worship, theology, children and youth work, church premises and land, ethical finance, lifestyle and community and global outreach. [www.ew.ecocongregation.org](http://www.ew.ecocongregation.org)

**A Rocha**, an international organisation with a focus on science and research, practical conservation and environmental education. [www.arocha.org](http://www.arocha.org)

**Operation Noah** – focusing exclusively on Climate Change [www.operationnoah.org](http://www.operationnoah.org)

# Churches in Transition



## What are Transition Towns? How can churches get involved?

There are many Christians across the UK who are involved in their local transition initiative – either as a member of an organising group or as a participant in the various activities. In view of this, CEL has launched 'Churches in Transition' (CiT) to enable CEL members and other 'green' Christians to get churches linked in with the Transition Towns movement in a Christian context and to encourage practical responses at an individual and community level.

## Join Christian Ecology Link

Send £18 standard (low income £10), £28 joint/family/corporate, or a donation for church membership (recommended amount £25) to: CEL, FREEPOST SE 8672, 9 Nuthatch Drive, Reading RG6 5ZZ.

Cheques payable to CEL.



ChristianEcologyLink

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## What are Transition Towns?

From its beginnings in a small town in Ireland in 2004, the Transition Towns movement was established in the UK in 2005 as one community's direct response to the realities of Climate Change and Peak Oil.

Many of us are now aware of the term 'Climate Change' – but what does it actually mean – and what are the implications?

In September 2007 the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reported that:

'...if (global) warming is not kept below 2 degrees centigrade, which will require the strongest of mitigation efforts, and currently looks very unlikely to be achieved, then substantial global impacts will occur, such as species extinction and millions of people at risk from drought, hunger and flooding etc'.

(IPCC Press Release, 18 Sept 2007)

'Peak Oil' may not be such a familiar term. This refers to the point at which the extraction of oil reaches its maximum point and then declines. This can be applied not only to oilfields but also to regions, nations and the whole world. Global discovery of new oil peaked in 1965 – and therefore it is likely that global production as a whole will decline.

This situation is worsened by the ever-increasing demand for oil. A shortage of supply and an increasing demand inevitably results in higher prices and an unfairness in access and affordability.

We therefore need to consider how we might live more sustainable lifestyles – as both individuals and communities. And it is at the level of community where the Transition Towns movement is working.

There are now (as at August 2010) over 300 'Transition Towns' in what has become a worldwide movement.

Transition initiatives are based on 4 key assumptions:

- 'That life with dramatically lower energy consumption is inevitable, and that it's better to plan for it than to be taken by surprise.
- That our settlements and communities presently lack the resilience to enable them to weather the severe energy shocks that will accompany peak oil.
- That we will have to act collectively, and we have to act now.
- That by unleashing the collective genius of those around us to creatively and proactively design our energy descent, we can build ways of living that are more connected, more enriching and that recognise the biological limits of our planet'

(Rob Hopkins, *The Transition Handbook*)

Transition towns may be large cities, small villages or any area in between – and the ways in which local communities will undertake transition will very much depend on local conditions.

The process follows 12 stages, culminating in an 'Energy Descent Plan' which involves local residents in specific projects including local food production, transport, energy use etc. In this way members of communities work together to build a resilient future.

## A Biblical Perspective

The Bible gives us a very simple and clear-cut basis for a Christian doctrine of the environment, i.e. that:

- Creation belongs to God
- He has entrusted us to take care of it
- We will be held accountable for the way we treat his creation.

The final chapter of the Bible story is yet to be written. The Bible contains some images as to what it will be like.

'New heavens and a new earth' (Isaiah 65) and no more crying, pain, death, famine or drought (Revelation 7).

'Old men and old women shall again sit in the streets of Jerusalem....and the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing ...there shall be a sowing of peace; the vine shall yield its fruit, the ground shall give its produce, and the skies shall give their dew....speak the truth to one another, render in your gates judgements that are true and make for peace' (Zechariah 8).

Hope for the transformation of the world's current circumstances also appears in the New Testament and is an important part of Christian belief.

In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus' followers are exhorted to pray for the coming of the Kingdom of God, on Earth (Matthew 6:10). Jesus came to teach us how to live on earth – as it is in heaven.

Christian communities live 'in transition', in the now and the 'not yet' of God's Kingdom.

The better future that God offers, and that we work towards, is a future of restored relationships and repaired connections. Our present day relations with one another and with the Earth community as a whole anticipates that better future.

We exist in two dimensions simultaneously – the present reality of brokenness, and the future reality of a redeemed Earth. We live 'in between', in transition. And in that place, when we are truly thankful of God's blessings, we cannot help but share them.

In the Transition Towns movement we have the chance to make a real difference here and now – and to leave a lasting legacy for generations to come.

## How can Churches get involved?

The rapid emergence of the Transition Town movement presents an opportunity for churches to get involved.

If congregations can engage with their local initiative, then there will be genuine benefits for the churches, the wider community and the planet.

There are many CEL members and other Christians who are already involved in local Transition initiatives.

As Christians we need to begin to make the connections between our 'working theology' and the Transition initiative, so that we are both faithful to our tradition, and credible in the eyes of those with whom we work, both inside and outside the churches.

Indeed, we may wish to use the terms 'transformation' and 'transition' interchangeably.

CEL members have a vision of how God's Kingdom might relate to the many-layered crises in our world. They are committed to giving expression to their vision through informed action and faithful response.

Central to the concept of Transition Towns is the reality of local people working together.

Of course many community groups already exist in cities, towns and villages across the country – and often the most visible, active and (almost certainly) oldest communities are based in churches.

It therefore follows that truly successful transition initiatives will include the participation and wisdom of Christians and members of other faith groups.