

ORGANISATIONS

Regional Water Companies produce useful leaflets with ideas on saving water in the house and the garden. They are also investing in improving bathing water quality by better sewage works for coastal towns.

WaterAid use low cost, appropriate technology to provide safe water supplies and sanitation in Africa and Asia. The Water Aid website contains a long list of organisations which deal with water and related issues, from NGOs, Government Agencies, Academia/Research Bodies, and International Organisations. There is a Young Water Action Team as well. Water Aid, 2nd Floor, 47-49 Durham Street, London SE11 5JD. 020 7793 4500. www.wateraid.org.uk

Wells for India is a UK charity working with villagers in drought stricken Rajasthan, India to provide fresh sweet water by digging wells, deepening ponds, and harvesting and piping water. The Winchester Centre, 68 St George's Street, Winchester SO23 8AH. 01962 848043. www.wellsforindia.com

Also active in appropriate water technology are the **Centre for Alternative Technology** (Machynlleth, Powys SY20 9AZ. 01654 705950) www.cat.org.uk and **Practical Action**, The Schumacher Centre for Technology & Development, Bourton-on-Dunsmore, Rugby CV23 9QZ. 01926 634400. www.itdg.org

For connections between water and trees contact:- **Reforest the Earth** (42-46 Bethel Street, Norwich NR2 1NR. 01603 631195); and **International Tree Foundation** Sandy Lane, Crawley Down, West Sussex RH10 4HS. 0870 7744262. www.internationaltreefoundation.org.

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Send £18 standard (low income £10) or £28 family/corporate, or a donation for church membership (recommended amount £25) to CEL FREEPOST, SE 8672, 9 Nuthatch Drive, Earley, Reading RG6 5ZZ. Cheques payable to CEL. For more information contact: CEL, 10, Beech Hall Road, London, E4 9NX, UK. 0845 459 8460 . Email info@christian-ecology.org.uk

The Shared Earth Trust has experimented with breaking land drains and restoring marsh and water meadows on a small area of Welsh farmland. They have monitored the dramatic increase in small mammals, amphibians, birds and insects over a ten year period. They run training courses in conservation, restoring biodiversity, creating ponds etc. Denmark Farm Conservation Centre, Betws Bledrws, Lampeter, Ceredigion SA48 8PB. 01570 493358. www.shared-earth-trust.org.uk

For more information on fluoridation write to the **National Pure Water Association**, 42 Huntingdon Road, York YO31 8RE. 020 822 09168. www.npwa.freereserve.co.uk

Surfers Against Sewage keeps the pressure on government and water companies to clean up coastal waters and beaches. Wheal Kitty Workshops, St Agnes, Cornwall TR5 ORD. 0845 458 3001. www.sas.org.uk

BOOKS & PACKS

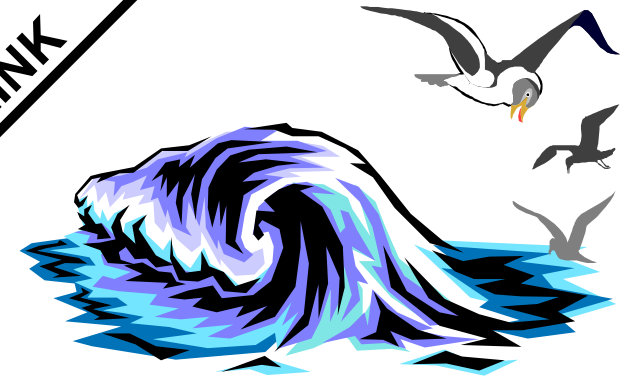
Edward P. Echlin, *The Cosmic Circle: Jesus & Ecology*, Columba, 2004, for more thoughts connecting Jesus and water.

For churches:- Tearfund — '*Water In Tomorrow's World*' Report; '*Splash Out*' Pack focusing on water issues with some practical Christian responses; 'Making Every Drop Count' Policy Report available on **Tearfund** website. 100 Church Road, Teddington, Middlesex TW11 8QE. 020 8977 9144. www.tearfund.org

United Nations:- 'Meeting the millennium Development Goals Drinking Water and Sanitation Target' Booklet ISBN 92-415-6278-1, available on **UNICEF** website www.unicef.org



CHRISTIAN
ECOLOGY LINK



WATER

"Earth and sea partake of the joy of the world:
and the world is filled with gladness."

(Blessing from the Orthodox Feast of Epiphany.)

Water is a precious and life-giving gift. Without water our planet would be as barren as Mars. There would be no flowers or vegetables, no meadows, no forests, no birds, animals or people. Water even makes up a large part of our bodies.

Life on earth began in the seas. Today over 70% of the planet's surface is covered by water. Seen from space our 'Earth' might be better named 'Water'. Most of the Earth's water is in the oceans.

There are many threats facing the seas and fresh waters of the world from pollution and over fishing to destruction of coral reefs and mangrove swamps. Access to water causes many conflicts and war pollutes water with oil and chemicals.

This leaflet mainly focuses on fresh water in the UK and why water is especially important for Christians.

Send for copies of this leaflet to CEL Publications, 40 The Avenue, Roundhay, Leeds LS8 1JG.

Please send a donation to cover cost of printing and postage, or at least an S.A.E.

You are welcome to photocopy it if you acknowledge CEL. May 2006/Jan 2011.

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'Today the nature of the waters is made holy.'

An Epiphany hymn.



Water in the Bible

It is striking how often water is connected with Jesus in the Gospels. One of the Fathers of the early church, Tertullian (d. 220), noticed this. He said, 'Christ is never without water!' He is baptised in water (Mt. 3.13). He invites the thirsty to drink eternal water (John 4.14). At a well he gets back his strength (John 4.6). He walks on water (Mt. 14.25). Jesus washes his disciples' feet with water (John 13.5-10) — and Pilate washes his hands in water (Mt. 27.24). Water flows from Christ's side when he is pierced by the soldier's lance (John 19.34).

The Waters of the Jordan

Jesus' baptism in the Jordan was thought about a great deal in the first few centuries of Christianity. One common theme was that all the waters of the Earth are made holy by Jesus' baptism in the waters of the River Jordan. A sixth century Syrian, Jacob of Serugh, expressed this idea poetically:

'The entire nature of the waters perceived that You had visited them — seas, deeps, rivers, springs and pools all thronged together to receive the blessing from Your footsteps.'

This close connection between Jesus' baptism in the Jordan and Christian baptism led to the baptismal font often being called 'The Jordan'.

How are we treating this life giving gift from God which is connected so closely to the life and death of Jesus Christ?

Over-Consumption

At least 354 wildlife sites across the UK are under threat from our wasteful use of water. The main reasons are

- **Over-abstraction.** Industry and electricity producers use enormous quantities of water. So do irrigation systems on farms, (but at least they are growing food, unlike sprinklers on golf courses or suburban lawns).
- **Land Drainage.** For years grants have been given to farmers to drain meadows, marshes and upland pastures. This has led to a dramatic decline in small mammals and butterflies and the rest of the food chain which depends upon them. Excessive drainage on uplands has led to increased flooding downstream, as water rushes into river systems instead of gradually being absorbed into the soil.
- **Drought.** The changing climate, with increased droughts in parts of the country, is adding to the drying out of traditional wetlands.

Pollution

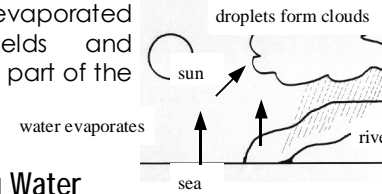
Industry, farming and domestic users are all guilty of using rivers and seas as convenient rubbish tips.

- nitrates from farms
- chemical spills from factories
- sump oil from vehicle services
- detergents from our homes
- insufficiently treated sewage

OIL POLLUTED WATER: - Every year oily road runoff into the drains from a city of 5 million could contain as much oil as one large tanker spill.

Rainwater

Studies show that much of the rain falling on Europe contains high levels of pesticides which have evaporated from fields and become part of the clouds.



Drinking Water

- **Fluoridation.** There is pressure in many parts of the country to add fluoride to water supplies, in order to reduce tooth decay in children's teeth. However, objectors argue that putting fluoride into the water supply imposes it on everyone and takes away people's choice. There is also inadequate evidence of the safety of low-level fluoride, which is a cumulative poison more toxic than lead.
- **Bottled Water.** Drinking bottled water, though tempting, is no solution. In the UK it is an expensive waste of resources, energy and transport, especially when imported.

Water Meters

These focus the mind on saving water, although ways need to be found to price water meters fairly for families in low-rateable value houses. Water use varies according to the type of appliance used. The table below gives some typical examples.

HOW MUCH WATER DO YOU USE?	
Having a bath	80-150 litres
Having a shower	30-45 litres
Flushing the toilet	9-14 litres
One load in washing machine	100-130 litres
One load in dishwasher	20-50 litres

Practical Steps

There are many ways in which we can conserve water as individuals or church communities. We can use water with greater respect, especially within our church services.

- This respect could be shown symbolically by sprinkling the water used at baptism, and at other church services, around the roots of a tree in the churchyard instead of pouring it down a drain.
- For churches with large baptistries for adult baptism a large amount of water is used. Could ways be found to re-use this water?
- Include a 'blessing of the waters' in church services, not only at baptisms but also during other services, as Orthodox churches still do at Epiphany, when celebrating Jesus' baptism.
- Consider how church land is being managed. Is it possible to remove drainage and restore some wetlands?
- Value a damp, wet corner of the churchyard and dig a wildlife pond at home.
- Mulch the churchyard flower beds to control weeds and retain moisture in the soil.
- Install water butts to catch rain from the church roof, the minister's house and your own home.
- Repair dripping taps.
- Don't leave taps running.
- Get a water saver for toilet cisterns, available free from many local water companies.
- Try to reduce the number of cars regularly using the church car park. Then dig up some of the surface and allow water to flow back into the living earth.