

# CVVUK NEWSLETTER

## Welcome to the Christian Vegetarians and Vegans UK newsletter, Spring 2021



**Website:** <http://www.christian-vegetariansvegans.org.uk/>

We hope you enjoy this newsletter. As always we would be pleased to receive any of the following from our supporters for future newsletters:

- interesting (short) articles;
- news of any local activities you have been involved in to promote the values of CVVUK;
- information about events that might interest other CVVUK supporters; and
- miscellaneous items such as book reviews, recipes and information about useful resources

If you have anything that you would like to contribute to the next newsletter please e-mail it to us at [sampsons@dsl.pipex.com](mailto:sampsons@dsl.pipex.com) by the end of June 2021.

**Miriam and Philip Sampson**

*Disclaimer: The information in this newsletter comes from a variety of sources and reasonable care has been taken to convey it accurately. Please note that opinions or statements may not reflect the views held by all members of CVAUK, and we accept no responsibility for any errors which may have occurred. Content is produced for information only and is not advice.*

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## News from our supporters

We are always delighted to hear about the activities that our members have been involved in to advocate for animals and the need to adopt a vegetarian or vegan lifestyle. David Genese has sent us this piece about his involvement with Bournemouth Animal Aid.

*Not to be confused with Animal Aid.org.uk this group is independently run and has been around since the seventies. It serves mainly to give information to the general public, on all aspects of animal welfare, as well as promoting a vegan lifestyle. We set up a stall each weekend in Bournemouth centre and at local outdoor events and festivals. People from all nationalities and all persuasions stop for a chat or help themselves to leaflets. The leaflets are free and sourced from charities like Viva, Animal Aid, CIWF, Animal Equality as well as CVVUK.*

*Although I've been a Vegetarian most of my life, I only became a Vegan after meeting Steve (who is the driving force behind Bournemouth Animal Aid). Before this I believed that dairy products were humanely produced by happy cows, goats and chickens. My "eyes were opened" after learning what really happens in the "Dairy Industry". This experience will resonate with many readers.*

*Strangely, very few Christians, that I know personally, are Vegetarian or Vegan. Hence it has been such a joy to find CVVUK and know there are lots of like minded Christians out there.*

*When I told Steve (who is not a Christian) that I was sending this article to CVVUK he was happy to add these lines outlining his own experience:*

*“Before I first became vegan in May 1984, I was not aware of all the issues and the effects of eating animals have on us and our planet. I very quickly realized that if I did not know then it was likely most other people would not know. So, I joined a local group, Bournemouth Animal Aid, which .....organised regular public meetings, trips to join protests and did leafleting in Bournemouth and Poole town centres.”*

*Eventually Steve became leader of the group, and he continues: “I talk with as many people as I can, and I feel there is a misconception amongst vegans that everybody knows what’s happening and chooses to ignore it. I feel that generally, most people have no idea and if they do not know then they in turn would not search to find out, so they remain in the dark. When people see the posters they often comment or discuss with their family, friends, rather than approach us. This is fine, a seed has been planted and that is all it takes, just add time.*

*I feel that the best way to inform people is to talk with them, asking them searching questions, about health, animals and our planet.”*

If you are involved with local advocacy around animal welfare and veganism, do share your experiences with us.

## The impact of Veganuary 2021

In the first week of January it was announced that 500,000 people had pledged to take the 31-day vegan challenge, an impressive figure which surpassed 2020’s total of 400,000, with new sign-ups still coming in thick and fast.



Even more remarkable than this impressive number of individual pledges was the response of supermarkets this year, as they embraced **Veganuary** with enthusiasm. Morrisons released a [Veganuary food box](#) whilst Tesco added new options to its Plant Chef range along with [new vegan bakery items](#) including cinnamon rolls and blueberry muffins. Tesco also featured a raft of vegan recipes on its website: <https://realfood.tesco.com/vegan-recipes.html> . Asda even launched the UK’s first in-store [vegan butchers counter](#) at its Watford store, featuring a range of meat alternatives!

There is no doubt that interest in a vegan diet is growing rapidly, and the supermarkets are certainly aware now that there is a rapidly expanding market for vegan products.

## Climate change and diet

The biggest ever opinion poll on climate change has found two-thirds of people think it is a “global emergency”. The survey shows people across the world support climate action and gives politicians a clear mandate to take the major action needed,



according to the UN organisation that carried out the poll.

The [UN Development Programme \(UNDP\)](#) questioned 1.2 million people in 50 countries, many of them young. While younger people showed the greatest concern, with 69% of those aged 14-18 saying there is a climate emergency, 58% of those over 60 agreed, suggesting there is not a huge generational divide.

Even when climate action required significant changes in their own country, majorities still backed the measures. Popular measures included replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy, protecting and restoring forests and climate friendly farming. However the promotion of plant-based diets was the least popular of the 18 policies suggested in the survey, with only 30% support.

The UNDP suggested that relatively low support for the promotion of plant-based diets may be because there are few plant-based options in some countries or people may have felt that diet is more of a personal choice. Support was highest in Germany (44%) and the UK (43%).

[https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/jan/27/un-global-climate-poll-peoples-voice-is-clear-they-want-action?CMP=Share\\_AndroidApp\\_Other](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/jan/27/un-global-climate-poll-peoples-voice-is-clear-they-want-action?CMP=Share_AndroidApp_Other)

I wonder if people are still not fully aware of the impact of diet on climate change. Fossil fuels versus renewable energy and deforestation versus tree planting get a lot more coverage in the media. There is work to do here.

## Arguments for veganism

As the number of vegans has grown, people who want to continue eating meat, or to promote it, have come up with all sorts of claims to counter vegan arguments. However many of these do not stand up to scrutiny.

A recent article in the Guardian examined 18 such claims in some detail. These included the claim that grass fed beef is low carbon and that transport emissions from eating vegetables transported from across the world is worse than eating local meat and dairy. The article comprehensively debunked such claims.

If you encounter friends, relatives or fellow church members who come out with these arguments against a vegan diet this article will be a great help in countering them:

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/jun/19/why-you-should-go-animal-free-arguments-in-favour-of-meat-eating-debunked-plant-based>

There was also an interesting debate in the “Steelmanning” series on Radio 4, examining arguments for and against a vegan diet (Episode 3, January 27, 2021). Kay Peggs, a Professor at Kingston University and a Fellow of the Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics, put the arguments for veganism. You can listen to it on BBC Sounds here: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m000rln9>

## Soya

In our last newsletter we included a piece about the environmental impact of soya production.

Soya can be controversial and we received some helpful feedback from Viva! about this, setting out some of the benefits of soya. We were grateful for this and thought it would be helpful to include some extracts from this feedback here:



*In the newsletter, it says that soya foods are high in plant oestrogens and can cause hormone imbalances in men and is often genetically modified.*

*Scare-stories about soya abound, particularly the warning that hormones in soya can interfere with sexual development, fertility and make men grow 'man-boobs'. These inaccurate accounts usually focus on phytoestrogens, natural substances found in soya but also many fruits, vegetables, pulses and wholegrains. They are between 100 and 100,000 times weaker than the oestrogens that occur naturally in human's or cow's milk. In fact, meat and dairy are the major source of animal oestrogens in the diet.*

*These scare-stories are based on small-scale animal experiments and have no relevance to humans. Phytoestrogens behave differently in different species and in many of these experiments, animals were injected with high doses or force-fed excessive amounts. Human studies show no such harmful effects.*

*Soya provides an excellent source of protein, healthy polyunsaturated fats including omega-3s, disease-busting antioxidants, B vitamins and iron. Soya protein lowers cholesterol and reduces the risk of heart disease. Girls who eat the most soya have a lower risk of breast cancer as adults than those who eat the least, and eating soya after a breast cancer diagnosis may reduce recurrence and improve survival.*

*Much of the soya foods consumed directly by humans in the UK, are made with organic beans sourced from Europe and the US – unlike the genetically modified soya grown for animal feed. For example, Alpro do not source soya from the Amazon. In their 2018 Sustainability report they say that in 2017, 60% of the soya beans they used were grown in Europe (100% of their organic soya beans were EU-sourced), with the rest coming from Canada.*

*There is a strong anti-soya movement that appears to have successfully spread these false stories and Viva! works very hard to correct that wherever possible. There are no human studies that show that soya has a harmful effect on people. Common sense would inform us that soya is safe given that in the US, around a quarter of all bottle-fed infants are given soya formula, many now in the 30s and 40s, no adverse affects have been reported. Similarly, if soya affected fertility, some evidence of that would have emerged from China or Japan - none has. Human studies show that soya phytoestrogens are completely safe and even beneficial to our health.*

*I was very pleased to see the newsletter putting right the myth that vegans eating soya are to blame for the environmental damage done by soya expansion, rightly saying that only six per cent is eaten by people with most going to animal feed so that people can eat meat.*

If anyone wants to follow this up you can find out more here: <https://viva.org.uk/planet/the-issues/soya/> and here: <https://viva.org.uk/materials/mini-fact-sheet-soya/>

## Soya and animal feed

So if 94% of the soya grown around the world is used for animal feed, what are the issues there?

Britain's leading supermarkets and fast food outlets are selling chicken fed on soya that has been linked to vast deforestation and thousands of fires across a vital region of tropical woodland in Brazil.

Tesco, Asda, Lidl, Nando's, and McDonald's source chicken produced in the UK by the agribusiness giant Cargill – America's second biggest private company. It is estimated that Cargill ships more than 100,000 tonnes of soybeans to the UK every year from Brazil's threatened Cerrado savannah. Though less well known than the Amazon rainforest to its north, the Cerrado is an enormous natural biome, covering two million sq km of land. It is a major habitat for wildlife – home to 5% of the world's plant and animal species – and a critical region for tackling climate change. It is also under increasing threat from industrial food production.

The findings come as the British government is proposing new legislation, aimed at stamping out deforestation in British supply chains, that would make it illegal for companies to import foodstuffs linked with any illegal environmental destruction in the source country. Campaigners and politicians say the legislation needs strengthening because it would potentially omit areas – including the Cerrado – where local laws permit significant deforestation.

“Voluntary commitments ... from the private sector just don't work, which is why we need robust UK legislation,” Kate Norgrove, director of campaigns at WWF-UK, said. “We need a legally binding UK target to end all deforestation and habitat destruction in precious landscapes like the Cerrado through our imports.”

**What is soya certification?** Global soya supply chains are complex and opaque. The beans from different farms are often mixed together, and buying carefully segregated sustainable product is costly and rare, so retailers rely on certification schemes that promise to offset their environmental damage.

Nando's, Asda and Lidl use credits, the most basic certification tier that involves purchasing offsets for every tonne of soya they use. The money supports farmers producing sustainably, but the soya in the supply chain is not necessarily deforestation-free. McDonalds also says it uses credits, among other schemes.

The next tier up, which Tesco has set as a goal for the end of 2020, is known as “mass balance”. This means it restricts its buying to suppliers who grow at least some sustainable soya. The supplier may mix this in with beans from deforested farms, but Tesco and its meat suppliers would only purchase a volume of the crop that matched the amount of sustainable soya that went in.

Critics call these schemes greenwashing that allow logging to continue. The retailers say they help fund progress towards less destructive farming, but almost all admit that more needs to be done – albeit in five or ten years’ time. But it is time we don’t have.

(With thanks to Greenpeace for much of this information)

## Brexit (Sorry!)

We are pleased to see some good side-effects of Brexit - for British animals at any rate - such as the banning of live exports. We can only hope others will follow. Hopefully we will lead the way in the needless deaths caused by the fishing industry too.

WWF and Sky Ocean Rescue calls for cameras on fishing vessels to address the number of creatures being killed in what is known as “bycatch.” Conservationists urged UK to lead the way with cameras on fishing vessels in its waters. At least 720,000 seabirds, 300,000 dolphins and other cetaceans, 345,000 seals and sealions, over 250,000 turtles and millions of sharks are caught as bycatch by commercial fisheries worldwide. WWF said cameras would help minimise needless deaths. [Daily Mail 19.11.20]

We also need to take every opportunity to lobby for more controlled use of fireworks if not an outright ban. The 8-month old zebra who was frightened by fireworks, and died after bolting and hitting the fence of her enclosure made national headlines, but many more die of fear, even more are traumatised. I am sure we all know, or have heard of a dog suffering from PTSD because of them. Fireworks also cause a peak in hospital admissions for asthma and lung disease. The enjoyment given to some humans is not a good enough reason even for the damage to the environment, never mind the suffering caused to other humans and the suffering and death of animals.

## RSPCA

The RSPCA announced on the 28th of January that it wishes to give up its prosecution role in cruelty to animals, after controversies about it being over-zealous. They said they are prepared to hand over the job of bringing cases to court to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS.), which is a pity as it is an area where one cannot be over zealous.

(From the Daily Mail 29.1.21 “RSPCA ‘WILL GIVE UP ITS OWN PROSECUTIONS’”)

## “A Practical Guide to Travelling as a Vegan”

Now that many of us are getting our Covid vaccinations we may be cautiously looking forward to a time when we can start going away on holiday again. This useful travel guide is full of practical information including:

- **Eye-opening stats** about our changing dietary habits: in 2021 it’s predicted that **12 million people in the UK** will have a meat-



free diet, and the **percentage of vegan Brits** has risen from 0.25% in 2014 to 1.16% in 2019.

- **How to travel as a vegan** - including tips on researching trips, knowing about destinations, and helpful phrases for ordering vegan food abroad.
- Advice on **vegan-friendly travel apps and websites** to help you plan where to eat and common mistakes to avoid as a vegan traveller.
- **Other useful links and resources** for travellers with specific dietary requirements.

The guide is beautifully illustrated and easy to navigate. Even though we can't travel yet, this guide will give you lots of inspiration and practical help with planning.

You can find it here: <https://www.loveholidays.com/holidays/vegan-travel-guide/>

## Why do most Christians have such an appalling attitude towards animals?

John Ryder writes:

*I write this on the feast of St Thomas Aquinas, because in many ways it is his fault.*

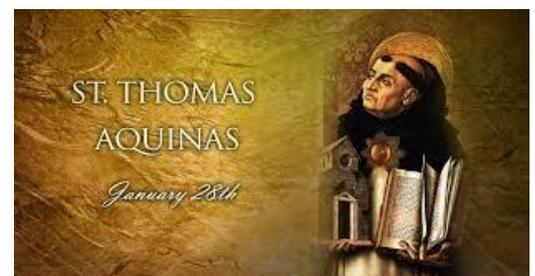
*Of course it is not his fault that many people, including many Christians, behave appallingly towards animals. The reason for that is sin, and the blame lies fairly and squarely on those who commit it.*

*But Thomas Aquinas is responsible for the excuse that many people use, for he stated that Christians have no obligation to be kind to animals.*

*He lived at a time of the reintroduction of Aristotle to the Christian West. To quote one introduction to him, "Truth cannot contradict truth: if Aristotle (the great, infallible pagan philosopher) appears to contradict Christianity (which we know by faith to be true), then either Aristotle is wrong or the contradiction is in fact illusory. And so Thomas studied, and taught, and argued, and eventually the simple, common-sense philosophy that he worked out brought an end to the controversy." (Universalis Website) So in Aquinas' great work, *The Summa Theologica*, he set about reconciling Christian belief with Aristotle (heresy, I would think, but he was praised for it) and he copied Aristotle's idea that because animals have no reason, humans need to feel no commitment to their welfare.*

*This is absurd and wrong in many senses, although sin, selfishness and self-indulgence have caused many Christians to agree.*

*It is absurd because the fact that someone - human or animal - has no reason (and there are also plenty of humans who cannot reason) is not a reason not to care for them; rather it is a reason for those with reason to care for them more carefully.*



*It is factually wrong because it is blatantly obvious to anyone who has observed animals with an open mind that animals do have reason. I have personally known cats, dogs, horses and parrots who have used their reason to thwart humans very successfully.*

*And it is theologically wrong not only for many biblical and theological reasons - some of which you can see on our website - but also because it is totally unacceptable to try to conform Christian belief to pagan ideas. We need to convert the world, not be conformed to it.*

*It makes me wonder if Aquinas ever read what St Paul had to say about the so-called wisdom of this world.*



## Lent – 40 Days with God’s Creatures

Many of our readers will know that Don Gwillim, the founder of the organisation out of which CVVUK has grown, campaigned for many years for “Veg for Lent” but met resistance among church leaders that he approached with this idea.

Now though, there are some great resources available to encourage people to commit to observing Lent by not only modifying their diet but also thinking and praying about whether the way that we treat animals glorifies God.

An outstanding new resource, launched this year, is the innovative app **40 Days with God’s Creatures**, developed by Sarx. This is designed for use on a mobile phone and can be downloaded free from the appropriate app store to an iPhone or an Android phone. However if you don’t have a smart phone the app can also be viewed here: [www.40dayswithgodscreatures.org](http://www.40dayswithgodscreatures.org)

Endorsed by Christian leaders from many different traditions the app includes daily reflections, prayers, weekly challenges, wonderful illustrations from artists across the world and weekly blogs from Christians who have committed to a lifestyle which eschews cruelty to animals. It would be a wonderful devotional tool for any CVVUK supporter and it would also be something you could recommend to Christian friends and family, to encourage them to use the Lenten period this year to consider the implications of their faith for God’s creatures.

Full details, an introductory video and a fully illustrated brochure can all be found here: <https://sarx.org.uk/latest-news/40daysguide/>

We would encourage you to make this the centrepiece of your Lenten observance this year and to encourage others to use it too.

Those who are not particularly “tech savvy” may find it easier to use a Lenten resource which can be printed for daily use. The diocese of Toronto in Canada has produced a Lent guide which focuses on living sustainably on God’s earth and includes prompts about a plant-based diet and our reflections on interactions with animals.

**A Fast for the Earth – Lent 2021** can be downloaded and printed from this website: <https://www.toronto.anglican.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Lent-Fast-2021.pdf>

## Recipe - Aloo gobi traybake

This recipe from the Tesco website is an easy way to bring Indian flavours and colours to a midweek one dish meal. Once everything has been assembled in the baking dish it can be left to roast in the oven until it's time to serve.

Serves 2: 10 minutes to prepare and 30 minutes to cook.



### Ingredients

- 300g baby potatoes, halved (or a large potato cut into chunks)
- ½ x 400g pack cauliflower and broccoli florets
- 3 tomatoes (about 250g), roughly chopped
- 210g tin chickpeas, drained
- 1½ tbsp tikka curry paste
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 red chilli, sliced
- 15g fresh coriander, stalks and leaves separated, both chopped
- 1 lime, cut into wedges to serve

### Method

1. Preheat the oven to gas 6, 200°C, fan 180°C. Line a baking tray with nonstick baking paper. Boil the potatoes for 5 mins, then drain and tip onto the baking tray with the broccoli, cauliflower, tomatoes and chickpeas. Mix together the curry paste, oil, chilli and coriander stalks. Pour onto the tray and mix everything together. Season.
2. Roast for 25-30 mins until the vegetables are tender. Scatter with the coriander leaves and serve with the lime wedges for squeezing over.

## And finally.... a reflection from St Isaac the Syrian

As a hermit and bishop of Nineveh in Syria, St. Isaac is one of the greatest figures of the Christian East. Isaac is known as a spiritual master and as a powerful and prolific writer who reflects the Syrian emphasis upon rigorous spiritual formation leading to a deep and continual love for all people and all creatures. This, he says, cultivates a “cosmic love” which enables one to perceive the divine fire which indwells all things. Through the one who submits to the cross and follows Christ into the crucifixion, a transfiguration takes place so that the peace of paradise radiates forth. Within this radiance wild beasts and even people become changed.



Isaac the Syrian

Isaac authored over ninety texts of which only about half have been translated into Greek; few exist in English. For modern ecology, St. Isaac epitomizes the heart-felt love for God and His creation which the ascetics of the Eastern desert bring to Christian vision, thought and practice.

Here is a reflection from St Isaac:

### A Charitable Heart

*‘What is a charitable heart? It is a heart which is burning with a loving charity for the whole of creation, for men, for the birds, for the beasts, for the demons — for all creatures. He who has such a heart cannot see or call to mind a creature without his eyes being filled with tears by reason of the immense compassion which seizes his heart; a heart which is so softened and can no longer bear to hear or learn from others of any suffering, even the smallest pain, being inflicted upon any creature.*



*This is why such a man never ceases to pray also for the animals, for the enemies of truth, and for those who do him evil, that they may be preserved and purified. He will pray even for the lizards and reptiles, moved by the infinite pity which reigns in the hearts of those who are becoming united with God.’*

~ Mystic Treatises XXIII. Quoted in *The Virtues: Commitment, Spiritual Practice and Transformation*, Michael Crowley, EPIPHANY JOURNAL, Vol. 6.1.(Fall 1985) pg. 55.

<http://www.orth-transfiguration.org/resources/library/writings-of-the-saints/st-isaac-syrian-640-eighth-century/>