

Interfaith Vegan Coalition

CHRISTIAN CHURCH KIT



Demonstrating the Christian Ideals of Harmlessness and Universal Lovingkindness: Eight Steps



These are 8 steps that could be introduced at your church either one at a time or all together. The goal of these steps is to bring the golden rule ideal of harmlessness and loving kindness into alignment with everyday church practices. You can do this alone, but it is very helpful if you have some interested church members who could join you in forming a “Green” committee or similar group that could help you promote these steps. Resources for these steps are listed below.

- 1.** Include at least one prayer each week for animals in the church services. Join the Worldwide Prayer Circle for Animals at circleofcompassion.org as a congregation.
- 2.** Include reverence for and kinship with all God’s creatures in the church’s mission statement. Include language such as “guardian” rather than “owner” when referring to companion animals. (See In Defense of Animals’ Guardian Campaign, idausa.org). Use “he” or “she,” rather than “it,” when referring to animals.
- 3.** Help develop a policy to remove or repel insects, mice and others without harming them and to protect birds from hitting large windows.
- 4.** Encourage education and discussion about how the church can help animals by hosting films, speakers, and book studies about veganism and doing no harm to animals. Also, education about the intersectionality of all social justice movements, including animal rights, is very important.
- 5.** Encourage church sponsored family outings that are nonviolent, such as hiking, camping, and canoeing, instead of hunting, fishing, rodeos, zoos, and circuses.
- 6.** Require that members not wear fur into the church out of respect for God’s beautiful creatures who are brutally raised and killed for vanity.
- 7.** Begin purchasing paper, cleaning products, candles, etc. that are ecologically sustainable, fair-trade, and certified cruelty-free.

8. Certainly the most challenging step, but the most dramatic in its message of compassion and social justice, will be for the church to sponsor only cruelty-free meals. Sharing plant-based meals as a community acknowledges our commitment to our own physical health, the health of the earth, the people who are hungry in the world (since a plant-based diet uses far fewer resources than an animal diet does), and the right of all animals to live their own lives free from human exploitation and violence.

Sponsoring only plant-based meals also signifies respect and inclusion of those church members who are already committed vegans. Such meals signify our desire to mean what we say when we pray together--"on earth as it is in Heaven."

Overview and Resources prepared by Steve Kaufman of [Christian Vegetarian Association](#).

OVERVIEW

1. The Bible describes veganism as an ideal, particularly in Genesis 1:29-30 and Isaiah 11:6-9.
2. The Bible never endorses cruelty to animals, and in fact there are many passages prohibiting animal abuse. See, for example, Deuteronomy 22:10 and 25:4, Psalm 145:9, and Proverbs 12:10, as well as the kosher slaughter laws designed to minimize pain.
3. The Bible does not mandate that people consume flesh or other animal products.
4. The Bible does not appear to categorically prohibit animal exploitation for labor or food, but conditions today are very different from those of biblical times.
 - A. We have alternatives to animals for transportation, plowing fields, and other work needs.
 - B. Nearly all of us can thrive, often with health benefits, by adopting a vegan diet.
 - C. Though killing animals has always been violent, today's factory farms and slaughterhouses involve far more pain and suffering than biblical animal husbandry

QUOTATIONS

Saint Basil, AD 329-379; Greek patriarch and one of the founders of monasticism: "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness Thereof, Oh, God, enlarge within us the Sense of fellowship with all living Things, our brothers the animals."..

William and Catherine Booth,
Founders of the Salvation Army

"It is a great delusion to suppose that flesh-meat of any kind is essential to health. Considerably more than three parts of the work in the world is done by men who never taste anything but vegetable, farinaceous food, and that of the simplest kind. There are more strength-producing properties in whole meal flour, peas, beans, lentils, oatmeal, roots, and other vegetables of the same class, than there are beef or mutton, poultry or fish, or animal food of any description whatever."

Saint John Chrysostom, AD 345-407; Greek patriarch; archbishop of Constantinople (398-404): "The saints are exceedingly loving and gentle to mankind, and even to brute beasts ... Surely we ought to show them [animals] great kindness and gentleness for many reasons, but, above all, because they are of the same origin as ourselves."

Leo Tolstoy

"The vegetarian movement ought to fill with gladness the souls of those who have at heart the realization of God's kingdom upon earth, not because vegetarianism itself is such an important step towards the realization of this kingdom (all real steps are equally important or unimportant), but because it serves as a criterion by which we know that the pursuit of moral perfection on the part of man is genuine and sincere."

"If a man aspires towards a righteous life, his first act of abstinence is from injury to animals."

Saint Clement of Alexandria, AD 150-215:

"It is far better to be happy than to have your bodies act as graveyards for animals . . . The unnatural eating of flesh meats is as polluting as the heathen worship of devils, with its sacrifices and its impure feasts, through participation in it a man becomes a fellow eater with devils . . . Those who use the most

frugal fare are the strongest, the healthiest and the noblest . . .”

John Wesley,

Founder of Methodism and Wesleyanism:

“Thanks be to God!” Since the time I gave up the use of flesh-meats and wine, I have been delivered from all physical ills.”

Ellen G. White, a Seventh Day Adventist founder:

“The moral evils of a flesh diet are not less marked than are the physical ills. Flesh food is injurious to health, and whatever affects the body has a corresponding effect on the mind and the soul. Think of the cruelty to animals meat-eating involves, and its effect on those who inflict and those who behold it. How it destroys the tenderness with which we should regard those creatures of God! . . . How much better to get it direct by eating the food that God provided for our use!”

Tony Campolo, Author and speaker, adviser to President Clinton:

“In this day and age, it is important for us to consider vegetarianism - not only for health reasons, but also for the good of the planet. We all know the environmental implications of the increasing dependency of Western civilization on a meat diet.”

Mister Rogers. Rev. Fred Rogers, composer, creator, author and host of Mister Rogers’ Neighbourhood, ordained Presbyterian minister, and vegetarian: “I don’t want to eat anything that has a mother.”

Matthew Scully (Presidential adviser and speechwriter; author of *Dominion: The Power of Man the Suffering of Animals, and the Call to Mercy*. “It is a terrible thing that religious people today can be so indifferent to the cruelty of the farms, shrugging it off as so much secular, animal rights foolishness. They above all should hear the call to mercy.”

HYMNS AND SONGS

[All Creatures of Our God and King](#)

[All Things Bright and Beautiful](#)

[Think of a World Without Any Flowers](#)



BOOKS FOR STUDY GROUPS COMPATIBLE WITH CHRISTIAN TEACHINGS



Animal Theology by Andrew Linzey. Linzey shows that humanity’s obligations toward animals derive from animals belonging to God, not humans.

Dominion: The Power of Man, the Suffering of Animals, and the Call to Mercy by Matthew Scully. The author is a former speechwriter for President George W. Bush, and he has been an effective voice for animals, particularly among political conservatives.

The Dominion of Love: Animal Rights According to the Bible by Norm Phelps. Phelps demonstrates that the Bible supports the rights of animals not to be imprisoned, tortured, and killed for human benefit.

Disciples: How Jewish Christianity Shaped Jesus and Shattered the Church by Keith Akers. With careful scholarship, Akers shows that the early Christian movement was very likely vegetarian, and they learned this practice from their spiritual leader, Jesus of Nazareth.

Good News for All Creation: Vegetarianism as Christian Stewardship by Stephen Kaufman and Nathan Braun.

Guided by the Faith of Christ: Seeking to Stop Violence and Scapegoating by Stephen R. Kaufman. Kaufman first reviews cultural anthropological theories about human violence, and then argues that humanity will only find peace when it rejects violence and scapegoating in all its forms.

Justice Is Served: Why Christian Culture Inherently Supports Veganism by Brad Johnson/ Provides powerful arguments as to why Christians can and should adopt a vegan diet.

On God and Dogs: A Christian Theology of Compassion for Animals by Stephen H. Webb. Webb carefully studies arguments for and against compassion for animals in the Christian tradition.

The School of Compassion: A Roman Catholic Theology of Animals by Deborah Jones. Jones demonstrates that Catholic scripture and traditions support animal protectionism.

Vegangelical: How caring for animals can shape your faith by Sarah Withrow King. King shows that caring for animals should be part of a large Christian ethic of peacemaking, environmental stewardship, and care for fellow humans.

Vegetarian Christian Saints, Mystics, Ascetics & Monks by Dr. Holly Roberts. This is an impressive collection of accounts of Christian spiritual leaders who have chosen a plant-based diet.

For Love of Animals: Christian Ethics, Consistent Action by Charles Camosy. This is an ideal resource for those who are interested in thinking about animals from the perspective of Christian ethics and the consistent ethic of life.

Why Every Christian Should Be A Vegan by Ryan Hicks. This book takes a scriptural approach to the subject of humanity's treatment of animals, what God desires from us, and what the Bible says about it all. Every argument that Christians use to argue against veganism--is covered.

6 Week Church Course: Videos and written materials made by Creature Kind.



DOCUMENTARIES AND VIDEOS

[*An Introduction for Clergy*](#)

[*Father Frank Mann's Awakening to Compassion for Animals*](#)

[*Honoring God's Creation*](#)

“Peaceable Kingdom” and “The Witness” can be watched free [online](#).

“We Are All Noah” available from the [CVA](#).

“A Life Connected” is a short, 11 minute, but powerful and feel-good video online at <https://vimeo.com/13317130>

“[A Prayer for Compassion](#),” by Thomas Jackson.

[*Theology of Christian Veg*](#)

[Yourofsky](#) debate with some harsh language on Veganism & Religion.

Extensive library of talks and interviews with Christians on the Sarx [website](#).

Ryan Hicks, author of Why Every Christian Should Become Vegan, [Youtube Channel](#).

Collections of videos relating to the Bible and Christianity on the Jesus Vegans Youtube channel compiled by Patricia Mikkelson.

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLK6o8yollyn5aCw3MtUh7gekklweSA83L>

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLK6o8yollyn7LAIHMS3v8t-6jxsZnVHDo>

RITUALS AND CEREMONIES

Animal Rites: Liturgies of Animal Care
by Andrew Linzey

VEGAN CHURCHES AND PASTORS AND VEGAN FRIENDLY CHURCHES

<https://www.all-creatures.org/church/churchdir.html>



PRAYERS

All Creatures.org Prayers

<http://www.all-creatures.org/prayers/index.html>

Peace to All Beings Prayers.

Judy Carman's book, *Peace To All Beings: Veggie Soup for the Chicken's Soul* contains many prayers for animals that could be used in Christian services and ceremonies. Some of them can be found online at www.circleofcompassion.org and www.peacetoallbeings.com.

WEBSITES

[All-Creatures](#)

Weekly Christian sermons [All Creatures:](#)
All Creatures directory of various groups dedicated to compassion

[Catholic Concern for Animals](#)

[The Christian Vegetarian Association](#)

[Christian Veganism](#)

[Compassionate Spirit](#)

[Creature Kind.](#) Engaging churches in new ways of thinking about animals and Christian faith, with special focus on farmed animal welfare.

[Free from Harm](#)

[Circle of Compassion](#)

[Jesus People for Animals](#)

[Tribe of Heart](#)

Poetry and Essays by Heidi Stephenson, British Christian vegan and animal rights activist
<http://www.all-creatures.org/poetry/ar-stephenson-heidi.html>
<http://www.all-creatures.org/poetry/ar-poetry.html>

[Vegan Christianity](#)

ARTICLES AND BOOKLETS

Booklets:

[“Joyful, Compassionate Eating”](#)

This mainstay of the Christian Vegetarian Association is a concise overview of reasons for Christians to be vegan, and there is helpful information on transitioning to a plant-based diet. These can be ordered on the website so that you can hand them out.

[“Christianity and Vegetarianism”](#) by Fr. John Dear. Fr. Dear is a well-known peace activist who shows how nonviolence must include nonhumans.

Articles

[“How to start a vegan church”](#) by Pastor Frank Hoffman of [AllCreatures.org](#) “The following is the text of the remarks I made as a member of the panel: Engaging Religious Institutions (Moving major US religions in an animal-friendly direction) at the [Animal Rights National Conference](#) in Los Angeles, CA on July 13, 2014. My remarks report on the work of the Task Force on Animals, a subcommittee of the diocesan Bishop's Committee on the Environment in the Diocese of Olympia which covers western Washington state.” (There's a powerpoint attached.) [Starting a Vegan Church Where You Live.](#)

[“Knowing the Standard American Diet by Its Fruits: Is Unrestrained Omnivorism Spiritually Beneficial?”](#) by Matthew C. Halteman. This thoughtful essay challenges regards eating as a spiritual practice that should reflect how we receive Christ's message.

[“Our Food from God: Factory Farms & the Culture of Death”](#) by Christopher Killheffer. Killheffer argues compellingly that Christ's proclamation is for life, not death. Christians must resist the culture of death in all its forms, including animal agribusiness.

[“The Concept and Practice of Ethical Vegetarianism as Consistent with New Testament Themes”](#) by DeRonda Elliott. This Master’s thesis provides a very nice overview of Christian ethical themes that support a plant-based diet.

[“The Status of Animals in Biblical and Christian Thought: A Study in Colliding Values”](#) by Rod Preece and David Fraser. The authors explore the complex, and sometimes contradictory teachings of the Judeo-Christian tradition.

[“The Biblical Case for Vegan Living”](#) by Sarah Withrow King.

In depth Articles regarding Biblical passages by Albert Fecko

<http://www.serv-online.org/Q-and-A-Christianity.htm>

<http://www.all-creatures.org/discuss/whendid.html>

<http://www.all-creatures.org/discuss/rom14.html>

<http://www.all-creatures.org/discuss/luke22.7-16.html>

<http://www.all-creatures.org/discuss/1cor8-ajf.html>

<http://www.all-creatures.org/discuss/1cor9-10.html>

<http://www.all-creatures.org/discuss/whendidthe.html>

<http://www.all-creatures.org/discuss/col2.html>

<http://www.all-creatures.org/discuss/1tim4.1-5.html>

<http://www.all-creatures.org/discuss/heb-8.1-10.9.html>

[Addressing Biblical Objections to a Plant Based Diet.](#)



Follow Up Support for You

SHOULD YOU NEED IDEAS, SUPPORT,
ADVICE, ETC., PLEASE EMAIL:

veganspirituality@gmail.com

or activistsupport@idausa.org

