



Veg4Lent 2003



Christian Vegetarian Association.
Official Sponsor for Veg4Lent

A Letter to the Churches.

PATRONS: James Thompson: The Animals' Padre - Revd J.R. Hyland: Humane Religion
Dr Stephen Kaufman: CVA co-chair - Nathan Braun: CVA President / Founder.



We are an IVU Member Society

www.veg4lent.org

Chairperson: Don Gwillim --- General Secretary: Antony Neesham
Secretary (U.S.A.): Sue Grisham

Veg4Lent U.K.

Foresta, Pines Road
Liphook, GU30 7PL
Chairman@veg4lent.org

An ecumenical non-profit organisation dedicated to the promotion of a Vegetarian Diet for Lent as both an experiential opportunity and a transitional period throughout the whole of Christendom.

Veg4Lent U.S.A.

2624 Ridgeland Avenue
Waukegan, IL 60085
Sue@jimgrisham.com

May we respectfully draw the attention of your church to this year's 'VEG4LENT' campaign, the aims of which are outlined within the attached promotional flyer.

The 'VEG4LENT' campaign recognises that vegetarianism has held a contentious position within our Christian community since its formative period. It is a matter of individual Christian conscience, in deciding whether or not to receive Our Lord's message as lending support to contemporary ethical vegetarianism. An informed choice is therefore essential in addressing what has become a grave humanitarian issue, which will increasingly require both a credible and compassionate Christian response over the coming decades.

It is our aspiration to progressively share the insight that Christ's eternal teachings of Love, Mercy, Peace and Justice, need not be arbitrarily halted at the slaughterhouse gate. Indeed, we hope to demonstrate that God's love encompasses the animal kingdom too.

We therefore request permission to display the enclosed VEG4LENT flyer on your church notice-board, for the appraisal of your congregation. An accompanying full-colour poster and action-pack, for church study groups, is also available, which addresses the issues raised and their implications in greater theological depth (free introductory booklet available on request). It is ultimately hoped that the 'VEG4LENT' campaign will promote reflection and discussion in the wider Christian community offering a pragmatic response to today's injured world; a world in constant need of healing, through our participation with the grace of the Holy Spirit.

"Nothing will benefit human health and increase chances for survival of life on earth as much as the evolution to a vegetarian diet." *Albert Einstein*



The question is not, can they reason? Nor can they talk?
But can they suffer?
Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832)

Should anyone be condemned for eating meat?

No. Consumers do not purchase their neatly wrapped cellophane packages of meat at the grocery with a cold, calloused heart against animals. Nor do they sit down to a meal of steak or chicken with a murderous attitude. Most people are very affectionate toward animals and grieve over their death. However, relatively few are aware of the cruelty and suffering that factory-farmed animals have to endure. If consumers personally had to raise animals with the torturous methods of intensive animal farming and then personally slaughter the animals they ate, very few would continue to eat meat. They would recognise that abusive treatment of animals is morally wrong and would have no part in it. Yet unwittingly they are abetting one of the most hideous industries humanity has ever devised. *Richard Alan Young - Professor of New Testament Studies*



Why a Vegetarian diet.

The Christian Vegetarian Association encourages vegetarianism because of its "distinct health, environmental, and animal-related advantages". They encourage vegetarianism because the diet is ecologically sound, helps alleviate world hunger, and benefits human health.

Vegetarianism offers people everywhere important ways Christians may positively impact our world for Christ, by caring for people, animals, and the environment. We believe, therefore, that encouraging plant-based diets is an effective, evangelistic witness to the gospel. It is a contemporary response to Christ's command to 'go and make disciples of all nations'. (Matthew 28:19)

When we turn our backs to the plight of creation, to God's creatures, we are missing a golden chance for Christ to change us, to change our view, to see things as God sees them, to view life with compassion and justice, to see the connection and the big picture.

Jay Moses, Associate Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, Redlands, California.

Cruelty is the same whether it is towards man or animal: only the victim is different.

French writer & philosopher, Lamartine.



Why Lent

Reviving the ancient Christian Tradition of abstaining from meat consumption during Lent, we respectfully invite all Christians to use VEG4LENT as a period of reflection and prayer for all those currently condemned to the slaughterhouse.

As a contemporary adaptation of an ancient tradition, we politely urge each participant to adopt a vegetarian diet for each and every day between Ash Wednesday and Easter Sunday.

Lent is a sacred and spiritual period for Christians the world over. Greater empathy with Christ, gained during the Lenten period, allows us to be more receptive to the needs of our neighbour. As Christ taught us our neighbour is s/he who suffers. Are there any who suffer more than those condemned to the slaughterhouse? *Tony Neesham*

The earth lies polluted under its inhabitants, for they have transgressed laws, violated the statutes, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore a curse devours the earth. *Isaiah 24:5-7*

Personal Mission

Veg4Lent requires not just words but action at a personal level. Our Personal Mission does not rely for its conception on anyone else, we do not have to join an organisation or ask anyone for permission to become a vegetarian. It is based on what we consider to be our own personal calling by God, who we believe has revealed to us, through His Holy Spirit, the need for compassion towards all of His creation. Our mission will not adversely effect anyone, yes we do have a message but it is up to the individual to either accept or reject it.

As Robert M. Andrews writes: *The point is, I think, that we must be patient -- we are engaged in evolution, not revolution -- and the paradigm shift we seek may be long in coming, perhaps far beyond our own lifetimes. Nevertheless, we must be persistent, even insistent, in quietly letting our deeply held convictions be known -- as difficult, and emotionally costly as that may be.*

Our Personal Mission requires action, in our case vegetarianism. Anyone can become a part of this mission, rich or poor, young or old, healthy or sick. Our Mission does not add extra time to an already busy work load and, unlike other missions, it will benefit our health and may save us money. Could anyone truly deny that our mission, a vegetarian consciousness within the Christian community, will be a blessing, a gift from God, to all who embrace it.

A typical Christian response.

Some Christians will say *"But we are directed by Jesus to preach the Gospel, not save the planet; after all God is going to destroy it anyway"*.

Surely the Gospel is twofold, we are first saved and then changed. By allowing Jesus to rule in our lives, we have been given the means to transform this cruel, violent and suffering world into God's Kingdom of love, justice and compassion. When we pray *"may your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven"*, we should, through Jesus, become a part of God's answer to that prayer, by actively carrying on His work, until His return.

Jesus makes this perfectly clear in Matthew's Gospel:

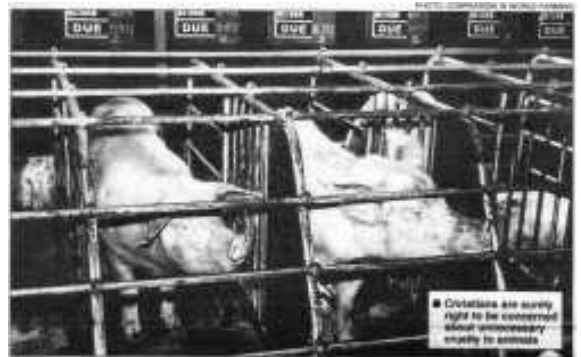
"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord [Christians? Who else would call Him Lord?]' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father [as taught by Jesus] who is in heaven. Matthew 7 v 21.

"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish [our praise and worship?], but inside [our attitude and lifestyle?] they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean. Matthew 23 v 25,26.

There is also the story of the "Sheep and the Goats", those who did "good works" were righteous, those who did not were cursed by Jesus and sent to eternal punishment. (Matthew 25 v 31-46).

The Gospel must be both preached, and obeyed. Jesus did not say "lay down your cross and wait for me" but *"pick up your cross and follow me"*.

The vegetarian meal is a celebration of life in which we permit our fellow creatures to experience the joy of existence that God graciously shared with us and our companions. It beckons us to a gentler, kinder way of life that exemplifies the Christian hope. My prayer is that our daily meals will become spiritual activities that celebrate the wonders & mysteries of God and God's creation". *Richard Alan Young - Professor of New Testament Studies.*



A person is not a true Christian if his dog or cat were not the better for it.

Charles Spurgeon

Prayer

Lord, forgive us for our greed and the part we have played in so much destruction of your world. Forgive us for the way we have exploited the earth's resources for ourselves, while so many lack the basic necessities.

Instill in us a new heart and a new determination, to follow a lifestyle that is gentle to the earth and all its creatures and just to the poor.

Author Unknown.

Further thoughts on Lent.

Early Christians considered that Easter was so important that they needed time to prepare. By observing the 40 days of Lent, Christians imitate Jesus' withdrawal into the wilderness with the animals for 40 days. So Lent begins on Ash Wednesday and finishes Easter eve. In many countries, the last day before Lent (called Mardi Gras, Shrove Tuesday, Carnival) is a last fling before Lent. For centuries it was customary to fast by abstaining from meat during Lent, which is why some people call the festival Carnival, which is Latin for farewell to meat. The English custom of eating pancakes was undoubtedly due to the need to use up eggs and fat which were originally a prohibited part of the Lent diet.

Today, what Christians give up for Lent is becoming a joke, either sweets, cakes or television. Such a frivolous approach to Lent is hardly honouring to God, surely a non-violent diet that suggests a turning towards God's peaceable kingdom, would be more appropriate.

All creatures have the same source as we have. Like us, they derive the life of thought, love, and will from the Creator. Not to hurt our humble brethren is our first duty to them; but to stop there is a complete misapprehension of the intentions of Providence. We have a higher mission. God wishes that we should succour them whenever they require it.

St. Francis of Assisi

Promoting Veg4Lent in your church

It is very difficult to know where to begin, so here are a few suggestions:

1. The gentle approach is best, you must avoid being confrontational (this can be very difficult with some Christians), if they lose their tempers try not to lose yours (not easy). If they refuse to listen to your message, just walk away, at least you tried and that is what counts and forcing the issue will get you nowhere.

2. Please realise that introducing vegetarianism into the Christian church is a long term project. As my own vicar informs me, the best way will be to drip feed the information. Initially this can be done by simply putting up a notice (say our flyer) on the church notice board (N.B. with the clergy's permission). Add your name to the notice; then wait to see what response you get.

3. If you have a church magazine, submit an article, either one you have written or one from this letter.

4. Place some leaflets in the church, with a note "Anyone interested to contact..... [you]".

5. When praying in a group, pray for all of God's creation, you could remember and use one of the prayers in our Action Pack or the prayer in this campaign letter.

6. Promote "Animal Welfare Sunday" (first Sunday in October), in churches in your area. Animal Welfare Sunday is an initiative of the "Anglican Society for the Welfare of Animals". Two booklets: Introducing / A Service for, Animal Welfare Sunday " can be obtained free from Samantha Chandler, PO Box 7193, Hook, RG27 8GT or by telephone: 01252 843093.

All the above will give you some idea of how your church will react, both the clergy and the congregation. You may be blessed with a listening church but you must be prepared to be ignored. Indifference to the suffering of animals and the environment is the most difficult reaction to cope with.

However, we truly believe that our Veg4Lent message is a calling from God, and that the Lord will use our endeavours to lead His people into a vegetarian consciousness. We look upon Veg4Lent as a signpost pointing to a better future. While on earth, we may never know how God has used us but the sure knowledge that our message is "His Will", is all we need to know, to keep us going.

Church Times News Article

Abstain from meat, says Lent group

Author Rachel Harden

Date 25 January 2002

A CAMPAIGN is asking church leaders across the country to encourage their flocks to give up eating meat for Lent.

The Veg4Lent campaign aims to "promote vegetarianism throughout Christendom" in 2002 by mailing all the Anglican and Roman Catholic clergy with letters and flyers about the Lent project.

The campaign's promotional literature calls on Christians "to extend the principles of love, mercy and reverence towards the two million animals otherwise killed daily in the UK".

It also says that Christians will live "healthier and more spiritually consistent lives in forsaking an acquired taste for meat".

Veg4Lent, is looking for new members, area co-ordinators, and directors. It pledges to revive "the ancient Christian tradition of abstaining from meat-consumption during Lent", and sees Lent as an opportunity for "reflection and prayer for all those currently condemned to the slaughterhouse".

Its Vegetarian Diet for Lent Action Pack, available to churches, quotes resolutions of the 1998 Lambeth Conference, and concludes with a comment from Pope John Paul II that turning vegetarian "can also help you win salvation".

Patrons of the campaign include the Revd Professor Andrew Linzey of Blackfriars Hall, Oxford, who said on Wednesday that he thought that "vegetarianism is a modern aesthetic imperative," and that, "without knowing it, those who eat meat are actually participating in the systematic cruelty and exploitation of animals." In practice, he said, "it is impossible to produce meat on the vast scale we have it without its being detrimental to animals."

A vegetarian diet - Some thoughts and facts to help you.

1. Compassion for Animals.

No age has ever inflicted upon animals such massive punishments with such complete disregard, as witness scenes to be found on any given day at a modern industrial farm. Livestock farms around the world are becoming “growers” their barns “mass confinement facilities”, and slaughterhouses vast “processing plants” dispatching animals - “production units” - at a furious pace of hundreds per minute.

When a quarter million birds are stuffed into a single shed, unable even to flap their wings, when more than a million pigs inhabit a single farm, never once stepping into the light of day, when every year tens of millions of creatures go to their death without knowing the least measure of human kindness, it is time to question old assumptions, to ask what are we doing and what spirit drives us on. *Extract from “Dominion. The Power of Man, the Suffering of Animals, and the call to Mercy” by Matthew Scully.* Our inhumane treatment of livestock is becoming widespread and more and more barbaric.....Such insensitivity is insidious and can spread and be dangerous. Life must be respected and dealt with humanely in a civilized world. *U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd.*

The Facts:

50 Billion, yes I will say it again, **50 Billion** (CIWF) animals are slaughtered worldwide every year to satisfy our lust for meat. A cruel, violent, unnecessary and inefficient use of the worlds resources.

Why unnecessary: Millions of vegetarians throughout the ages have proved that we can survive to a ripe old age without eating meat. When it comes to: **Muscle Power** - The only man to win the Ironman Triathlon twice, Dave Scott (6 times winner), the world record holder for the Triathlon, Sixto Linares and the man who dominated Olympic track and field history, Edwin Moses were all vegetarians. **Brain Power** - Albert Einstein and Albert Schweitzer were both vegetarians. **Artistic Flare** - Leonardo Da Vinci was a vegetarian, and Paul McCartney is a vegetarian.

Why inefficient: 90% of protein, 99% of carbohydrate and 100% of dietary fibre is wasted by cycling grain through livestock. 20 vegetarians can be fed on the same amount of land needed to feed 1 person consuming a meat based diet.

2. Feeding the hungry and saving the starving.

As Christians we should be prepared to sacrifice our desire for meat to save the weak and vulnerable in this world. 38,000 children starve to death every day and 20 million people starve every year. 100 million people could be adequately fed if Americans alone, reduced their intake of meat by just 10%. It therefore follows that if only 10% of Christians became vegetarian, it would be enough to eliminate hunger and starvation from this world.

3. Protecting the Environment.

God wants us to be good Stewards, made in His image we are to rule and care, reflecting His love and compassion, to be in other words, God’s ambassadors. So as Christians, our care for all that God has made is fundamental to our faith, like our compassion for the weak and vulnerable, it is a Christian imperative.

Our desire for meat creates many environmental problems. The world’s cattle population has increased by 100% and fowl population by 200% over the past 40 yrs. The demand for food to feed this increase has caused unprecedented **soil erosion:** 4,000,000 acres and, **Deforestation:** it is estimated that 125,000 square miles of rainforest are destroyed annually. **Species extinction:** One species every hour become extinct due to the loss of rainforests and related habitats. The list is endless, and includes disposal of waste (excrement at the rate of 250.000 pounds / second, over 1 billion tons per year) and over consumption of water (2,500 gallons of water are needed to produce one pound of meat). 33% of our raw materials are consumed to satisfy a meat based diet while only 2% are consumed to satisfy a vegetarian diet.

4. Your Health.

Our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit and like the rest of creation, should not be abused or destroyed.

The risk of death from a heart attack by the average man is 50%, this drops to 15% for a vegetarian. Increase risk of breast cancer for women who eat meat is 4 times higher when compared to women who eat meat less than once a day. Increased risk of fatal prostate cancer for men who consume meats, cheese, eggs and milk daily compared to men who eat these foods sparingly or not at all is 3.6 times higher. Osteoporosis & kidney failure have been linked to excess protein consumption. The health status of pure vegetarians from many populations of the world according to the Food and Nutrition Board of the National academy of sciences is excellent.

5. Violence.

Hunger and famine will do more to destabilise the world; [they are] more explosive than all atomic weaponry possessed by the big powers. Desperate people do desperate things.....Nuclear fission is now in the hands of even the developing countries in many of which hunger and famine are most serious. Senator Mark Hatfield.

Feeding grain to cattle and other livestock while people starve has triggered bitter political struggles in developing countries and political strife between northern industrial nations and the poor nations of the southern hemisphere. Jeremy Rifkin

6. To demonstrate our love for God.

God intends.....our care of creation to reflect our love for the creator. Revd John Stott.

When we place the care of creation before our worldly desire for meat, we demonstrate our love for all of God’s creation and help to establish God’s peaceable kingdom here on earth; to put into practice the prayer we say every Sunday “your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven”

Knowing these facts, please ask yourself: WHAT WOULD JESUS DO?

WE NEED YOUR HELP.

Please pray for guidance and consider promoting a vegetarian consciousness within your church.
Please place the enclosed flyer on your notice board. Supporters Forms are also available, on request. Thank you.