

# Christian Vegetarian Association UK

Working towards a violence-free world

Home of Veg4Lent

## A Letter to the Churches

### A Vegetarian Diet for Lent



May we respectfully draw the attention of your church to this year's Veg4Lent initiative, 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 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 'Vegetarian Diet during Lent' campaign will promote reflection and discussion within 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.

#### 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*

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



#### 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, whilst so many lack the basic necessities.  
Instil 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.

#### Why a Vegetarian diet.

The Christian Vegetarian Association (USA) 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)



International  
Vegetarian Union

**Patrons:** Pastor James Thompson - the Animal Padre & Founder - Christians Against All Animal Abuse  
Rev. J.R. Hyland - Editor, Humane Religion, USA    Antony Neesham - Veg4Lent Founder  
Fr Derek Reeve - Catholic Priest (Retired), Southsea, Hampshire.  
Samantha Chandler - Correspondence Secretary, Anglican Society for the Welfare of Animals  
Deborah Jones - General Secretary & Editor of *The Ark*, Catholic Concern for Animals.



Never doubt that a small group of committed people can change the world, indeed it is the only thing that ever has - Margaret Mead

You must be the change you want to see in the world - Gandhi



"This movement should cause especial joy to those whose life is in the effort to bring about the Kingdom of God on earth, not because vegetarianism is in itself an important step towards that kingdom (all true steps are both important and unimportant), but because it is a sign that the aspiration of mankind toward moral perfection is serious and sincere, as it has taken the one unalterable order of succession natural to it, beginning with the first step."

Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910) - former Russian Count, ex-soldier, writer, pacifist and Christian ascetic.

"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*

## A vegetarian diet - 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.*

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

**Why unnecessary:** Millions of vegetarians throughout the ages and the World health Organisation have proved, that we can survive to a ripe old age without eating meat. **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 consider sacrificing 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. 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, to rule in His image, reflecting His love and compassion to all of His creation. 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, Deforestation and Species extinction. The list is endless, and includes disposal of waste, over consumption of water and raw materials.

### 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.

The desire for meat amongst wealthy nations can generate poverty and instability overseas, which often perpetuates war. Hunger and famine will do more to destabilise the world; they are more explosive than all atomic weaponry possessed by the big powers.

### 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 honour 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 prayerfully consider what Jesus would do.**

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