

Meet Dr. Jake Greenfield, Thieme Chemistry Journals Awardee 2026!



Dr. Jake Greenfield completed his PhD at the University of Cambridge (UK) and subsequently worked as a postdoctoral research associate at Imperial College London (UK). In 2022, he moved to the University of Würzburg (Germany) on an Alexander von Humboldt Fellowship and, in 2023, was awarded a Liebig Fellowship to establish his own group there; later that year, he also received an Emil Fischer Fellowship. In 2025, Jake was awarded an ERC Starting Grant and took up a tenured position at the University of St Andrews (UK), where he is currently based.

Thieme: Which field of organic chemistry are you interested in the most and why?

Dr. Greenfield: For me, it is supramolecular chemistry, particularly dynamic covalent chemistry. What fascinates me most is that, after synthesis, you are not limited to a single static molecule. Instead, the constitution of the system can still adapt and change, which gives a real sense of creative freedom and creates a rich playground for exploring new ideas.

Thieme: Following that, what is the focus of your current research activity?

Dr. Greenfield: The current focus of my research is on light-responsive imine-based systems. My team solved a long-standing challenge in this area: improving the photoswitching properties of aldimine-based photoswitches. This has opened up the possibility of studying light-responsive dynamic covalent chemistry directly at the imine bond and how light can be used to perturb dynamic-covalent systems away from equilibrium.

Thieme: What do you think about the modern role and prospects of organic chemistry?

Dr. Greenfield: For organic chemistry more broadly, I see its modern role as developing new ways to synthesize molecules more efficiently and sustainably, particularly for pharmaceutical and materials applications. In the area of supramolecular chemistry where I work, I think a major challenge is to translate the complex behavior we can now design into useful functions and applications. That is not straightforward, but there is vast room for creativity.

Thieme: Which difficulties are there for young upcoming chemists in your field? Do you have any tips?

Dr. Greenfield: One major challenge for young chemists is the sheer volume of literature and the difficulty of staying “reasonably” up to date. At the same time, moving into a less explored area can feel riskier (and might take more time to get established), but it often comes with a more manageable body of work and a better opportunity to distinguish yourself.

Thieme: What is your most important scientific achievement to date and why?

Dr. Greenfield: So far, it has to be establishing a group in Germany and addressing the long-standing challenges facing imine-based photoswitches. I think this really opens an interesting area where people can now finally escape the pit of equilibrium, if they so choose.

Thieme: Could you tell us something about yourself outside the lab, such as your hobbies or extra-work interests?

Dr. Greenfield: I really enjoy brainstorming ideas in coffee shops and cafés, particularly when I am somewhere new. It is a chance for me to think a bit more freely and use that time as a creative outlet (as well as explore new areas!). Most of the ideas go nowhere, but every now and then a nugget emerges.
