**ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL JUSTICE NEWSLETTER**. September 2022

From Kath Wade on behalf of **Wallsend Churches Working Together**

I want to tell you about all the things that are wrong with our economic system. I want to tell you about all that is wrong with forcing impoverished countries - which are bearing the brunt of climate change - to service debt to private lenders and rich countries like ours before taking care of their people. I want to tell you how desperately we need to address climate breakdown and biodiversity loss. I want to fire your spirit with indignation and the impetus to take action - but I realise that because of the current cost of living crisis facing so many millions in this country, this is quite a difficult moment. And yet, our crisis here the sixth-richest country in the world has its roots in the same world-wide broken systems.

**Did you know: that in the UK – the sixth-richest country in the world - millions of people live in poverty including almost one in three children(31%).**

You might wonder what global systems have to do with us here in Wallsend. And the answer is:- quite a lot really. We are told that the present decade (2020-30) is the decade in which decisive action must be taken in order to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions by almost 50% if we are to avoid catastrophic climate breakdown. A huge challenge, but not impossible if we have the will. We all need to play our part but Governments must to live up to their promises.

**Season of Creation**

It is currently the Season of Creation (1 Sept to 4 Oct) when Christians all over the world are praying and caring for creation.

<https://www.oikoumene.org/what-we-do/care-for-creation-and-climate-justice#season-of-creation>

Our relationship with God cannot be separated from our relationship with our fellow human beings and indeed, all of creation. All are interconnected and our future depends on our solidarity - hearing both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.

This year’s theme is to **Listen to the Voice of Creation**, lamenting the lost individuals, communities, species and ecosystems and those whose livelihoods are threatened by habitat loss and climate change.

The symbol is **The Burning Bush**. The prevalence of wild fires today symbolises the devastation caused by a warming climate. In contrast, the fire which attracted Moses did not destroy the bush because it was the fire of the Spirit calling Moses to free His people enslaved to the Egyptians. God told Moses to remove his sandals for he was standing on holy ground. The analogy here is obvious – we are to remove the sandals which cause pain and degradation to our fellow human beings, freeing them from the slavery in which we hold them by our lifestyles and we must tread lightly on Mother Earth on whom we rely for our very survival as a species.

**Why the urgency?**

We are enduring the 6th Mass Extinction – there has been a 60% decline of all wildlife since the 1970s

Our ‘throw-away’ lifestyles generate huge amounts of waste

Our wasteful diets lead to the loss of 12 million hectares of agricultural land across the world to desert each year

Our patterns of consumption have created 40.3 million modern slaves who provide us with goods and services driving a cycle of mindless consumerism, (Although there are those who dispute this number, the underlying tenet remains)

The push for growing economies in the global north is set to create extreme and unpredictable weather events affecting all of us, but those who have contributed least to global warming will suffer the greatest impacts.

**What can we do?**

Firstly, reacquaint ourselves with the **Three Rs**:-

**Reduce**

Cut down the amount of meat you eat.

Try to buy locally-grown vegetables or try growing your own.

Fly as a last resort – cheap flights cost the environment dear.

Walk, cycle or use public transport rather than using the car.

**Did you know: One of the most sustainable forms of transport, a double-decker bus can take up to 75 cars off the road and switching even 1 journey in 25 to the bus would save 2 million tonnes of CO2 emissions.**

Switch to a green energy provider.

Spend less time on the internet and don’t leave electrical goods on standby when not in use.

Put on extra clothing instead of turning up the heating but **never** compromise your health and wellbeing. Buy less stuff. The extraction of raw materials needed to make our possessions is often extremely harmful to workers and the environment.

Be a considerate buyer. Our purchases have ethical consequences – it is often said that we vote with our wallet so consider how something was made, how long it will last and what happens to it at the end of its life.

Remember to conserve water whenever possible.

**Reuse** (including repurpose)

Try to fix or mend things such as electrical and electronic goods, clothes or cars, rather than buying new.

Try sharing or donating belongings, tools, books, clothes with others instead of discarding.

**Recycle**

Try to prevent waste by avoiding buying overly packaged or single use goods

Try to carry a reusable cup and maybe pack a home made lunch

Perhaps you could make compost with waste food and paper, then use this to grow your own food

Know what can and cannot be recycled.and make sure your recycling is clean

**Remember:**

**What is good for you is good for the environment and**

**what is good for the environment is good for you!**

The above is not an exhaustive list – for other ideas take a look at the information at the following links:

North Tyneside Council

<https://my.northtyneside.gov.uk/category/1562/action-climate-change>

50 ways to save the planet – The Guardian

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2002/aug/22/worldsummit2002.earth21>

Friends of the Earth

<https://friendsoftheearth.uk/climate/saving-planet-top-tips-help-climate-and-nature>

Greenpeace

<https://www.greenpeace.org.uk/?s=Top+tips>

Or see your Church Noticeboard. Please note that all suggestions are for those who are able to choose them and no-one should compromise their health or well-being.

**Did you know: that included in the Financial Services and Markets Bill are government plans to scrap restrictions on food speculation**

While there are steps we can take as individuals, parish communities can commit to becoming Eco-Churches (<https://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk/>) or seek a Live-Simply Award (<https://cafod.org.uk/Campaign/LiveSimply-award>)

Also, Churches often have land that can be used to grow vegetables for those in our area who are struggling. Perhaps part of the land could be used for wildflowers and plants that attract pollinators like bees and butterflies.

**“It is a crisis of our lives as individuals, as family members, as community members, and as citizens. We have an environmental crisis because we have consented to an economy in which by eating, drinking, working, resting, travelling and enjoying ourselves we are destroying the natural, God-given world.” (Wendell Berry)**

Our relationship with God cannot be separated from our relationship with our fellow human beings and indeed, all of creation. All are interconnected and our future depends on our solidarity - hearing both the cry of the earth and of the poor. And while it is good to alleviate suffering wherever it exists, we also have a duty to challenge the systemic causes and play our part in changing our world – in other words, bringing about the Kingdom of God. More about these challenges in our next newsletter due during Advent.

**One final thought:**

You need to find what is genuinely yours to offer the world before you can make it a better place. Discovering your unique gift to bring to your community is your greatest opportunity and challenge. The offering of that gift—your true self—is the most you can do to love and serve the world. And it is all the world needs.

(Bill Plotkin, Soulcraft)

**MOST IMPORTANTLY: PRAY FOR RELIEF FROM SUFFERING AND FOR CHANGE IN HEARTS AND MINDS**