

The Future We Choose ISBN 978-1-83877-082-2

Continuing our summary of actions required to bring about a good future for our planet, this month we look at 4: **See yourself as a citizen, not a consumer.** *Previous summaries are available on the church website.*

Most of you will have heard of the south Indian monkey trap: - a coconut with a small hole drilled in its side, a ball of sweet rice inside. The monkey is attracted by the smell, grabs the rice, but can't retrieve its hand without releasing the rice. So it is trapped by its own instinct, not by anything physical. The authors compare us as consumers with the monkey. We know that our consumerism is slowly but surely destroying our planet, but continually buying clothes and gadgets has become a way of life that we seem unable to stop.

The biggest example of the power of advertising and consumerism is the fashion industry. Textile production is second only to the oil industry for pollution, adding more greenhouse gases to our atmosphere than all international flights and maritime shipping combined. Consumer goods companies spend a great deal of money advertising to make sure that we remain stuck in the consumption cycle. Billions of products are intentionally designed to become obsolete, fuelling growth as we strive to replace them.

What should we do?

- 1) *Reclaim your idea of a good life.* We can intentionally push back against advertising, seeing ourselves as citizens not consumers. Psychological studies have shown that mass consumption creates a bigger and bigger whole in our lives that we keep trying to fill.
- 2) *Become a better consumer.* Buying high quality clothes that will last and be handed down is better than buying cheap and discarding. Buy from companies that are public about their values. Most of all **reduce, reuse, repair and recycle.**
- 3) *Dematerialise.* There is already a trend towards sharing, from ownership towards service provision; from owning and buying CDs to streaming music for example. The world's largest provider of personal transport (Uber) owns no cars. In the near future individual ownership of cars may cease to exist as the dominant paradigm – the transportation we need might be offered by shared vehicles, probably self-driving and certainly electric. Choose to encourage it.

The chapter finishes with the story of the Happy Fisherman by Paul Coelho; <https://paulocoelhoblog.com/2015/09/04/the-fisherman-and-the-businessman/> We are reminded that the most important things in life are not things. We need to recognise what is enough, to move beyond the mindset of consumption and ownership, consciously avoiding the forces that feed the mindset, so increasing happiness and dramatically slowing our drain upon the planet.

Eco Meeting 9 October

We continue to meet monthly on Zoom. We were delighted to welcome Naomi Stevens and David Lewis onto the group. The main focus of the meeting was discussing the possibility of a week in which church focuses on environmental issues; perhaps with a title "Hope for Creation". Please look at for more information in due course. We also discussed the churchyard – but sadly since then we discovered that we weren't successful in our bid for financial and practical help with our churchyard from Kier Community Initiative. Dick Swarbrick informed us that he will be leaving Durham soon and so would be resigning from the Eco Group – many thanks were expressed for his contributions.

Impacts of Covid-19 on Climate Change

New Scientist has a good analysis of the situation, the changes and the hopes for the future in its 17/10/20 issue.

Situation: Our planet continues to warm. Pouring CO₂ into our atmosphere is like pouring water into a bath. COVID-19 has been like turning the tap down a bit; water continues to fill the bath, even if more slowly. Actually the estimate of the decline in global emission is between 4 and 7%. This is huge in comparison with the continued increase since the second world war, but is only a small way towards what we need to do, which is to get to a situation of net zero emissions.

“What happens next depends upon the colour of the economic stimulus that follows the pandemic”.

Editorial, New Scientist 17/10/20.

Governments around the world are planning to spend big to stimulate their economies. Indeed, \$159 billion of government investment announcements mentioning emissions cutting technology since the start of the pandemic, with electrification of transport scooping up about a quarter of that. Yet three countries – France, Germany and South Korea – account for three-quarters of this money, and the \$159 billion is only about 1% of all the stimulus. Our own government has promised to increase investment in renewable energy. Already we have been making progress:- in the UK, renewable sources generated 6.7% of electricity in 2009; in 2019 it was 36.9%. Yet if we are to meet our intentions of halving CO₂ emissions by 2030 and net zero by 2050 then we have to grasp this unique opportunity.

Please consider lobbying our politicians about this issue.

All but one of the hottest years on record have been in the C21, mostly in the past decade.

(Excess temp over the 1901-2000 average, rolling average Sept. – August)

2015-2016 1.06°C (El Nino year)

2019-2020 1.01°C

2018-2019 0.91°C

2016-2017 0.91°C

2014-2015 0.84°C

2017-2018 0.82°C

2009-2010 0.75°C

2013-2014 0.73°C

1997-1998 0.69°C

2006-2007 0.67°C

Source: NASA