

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 5: **Move Beyond Fossil Fuels**. *Previous summaries are available on the church website.*

Mark Carney, the former governor of the Bank of England, said that unless we make a smooth transition from today's fossil-fuel-based economy to the fully decarbonised economy we need in the future, at some point there will be a *jump to distress* meaning high carbon assets will suddenly drop in value by a huge percentage. Carney advised to avoid that at all costs. There is hope that we can avoid that; e.g. the heads of central banks are supporting the Network for Greening the Economy, and firms are now starting to assess the risks of climate change.

What should we as individuals be doing?

- 1) **Stand up for 100% renewable energy.** The cost of renewable energy has really dropped, so it is no longer necessary to plead; it makes economic sense. But we do need to keep pressing forward until we reach 100%.
- 2) **Make a time-bound, ambitious plan.** It is true that corporations and countries have great responsibility for leading the charge, but we can all play our part in reducing our own personal emissions. Those of us in this country who care about this issue should aim for at least 60% reduction by 2030. To do that please consider:
 - A) Buying an electric car by 2030.
 - B) Buy renewable energy from the grid and generating more at home.
 - C) Improving the insulation on your home.
 - D) Reduce the number of times that you fly.

When people consider lifestyle changes, they can become alarmed and feel that something precious is being taken from them. However, the opposite is the case. While we may resist change, the reality is that the speed, scale and reckless use of resources in our wasteful economy are making few of us happy. As we focus on making thoughtful changes to help preserve what we really care about, finding a sense of purpose often improves our quality of life.

Reasons to be Hopeful (New Scientist 16 January 2021)

There is a whiff of green optimism in the air. The 2020 Pandemic not only exposed how close humanity is to an environmental precipice, it also showed how humanity is capable of responding to existential threats. 2020 saw zero pledges by China, Japan, South Korea, the European Union's Green Deal, the UK's lead on green finance including making large firms come clean on their exposure to climate risks and a surprisingly green Brexit. In addition green energy is continuing to improve its competition with fossil fuels and the new administration in the US is taking up the challenge. Climate action is becoming embedded in how the world works. There is good reason to look toward COP26 with hope.

Reasons to be Worried

2020 was the joint hottest year on record, equalling 2016. Those years with the El Nino effect are hotter. 2016 had one and 2020 did not. Europe was particularly warm, at 1.6C above the long term average.

There is now evidence that pollution makes hurricanes worse. The particulates cause more water droplets to form, hence heavier rain.

Green Stimulus

Last year Global Emissions fell by 7% because of COVID-19 and the consequent reduction in travel and economic activity. When eventually we do bounce back from this pandemic, a vital question is what sort of economic activity will be encouraged. So far **just 1%** of the stimulus announced has been in green economies. (See New Scientist page 16, 2 January 2021.) We really do need to pressurise governments to stimulate a healthy and sustainable economic recovery. The UN's Report on the Physical Science of Climate Change is due to be published this summer, and will presumably highlight the weather extremes caused by Climate Change, which should add to the pressure to respond to the needs of our world in COP26.

Quick Wins

In his presentation during our Eco-Week Richard Lilly highlighted some easy things that we can all do to help:

- **Change your energy provider to green one**
- **Write to your MP**
- **Sign the climate coalition petition** (Link on David Lewis' recent email)
- **Work out your own carbon footprint**
- **Shop locally and buy local (low food miles)**
- **Eat less meat – particularly beef**

Some Books for 2021

Mike Berners-Lee has updated his book "There is no planet B, a Handbook for the Make or Break Years". Once again he emphasises what we can do as individuals to combat climate change. Bill Gates has written a book "How to Avoid a Climate Disaster", in which he argues that there are fortunes to be made in a Green Economy, but only if the right incentives are in place. These will need political backing to drive the necessary change. Michael E Mann has written "The New Climate War: The fight to take back our planet" in which he describes the rising tide of optimism about the conservation that it is possible for humanity to achieve; this is also essential since those who lobby on behalf of the Fossil Fuel Industries are now arguing for inactivity rather than trying to contradict the science of Climate Change.

Public Transport

Over a 100 cities in the world already provide free public transport, including the whole country of Luxembourg. Perhaps a more sustainable model for the UK to follow is that of Vienna, Austria, which has a pass which costs only 365 Euros a year (1Euro a day). Over half the population has one, and such initiatives do reduce our carbon footprints.