

# The stories we tell

Accounts of people coming together – to share experiences, absorb information, discuss ideas, to raise voices both in protest and praise – all are found in this issue. In Hannover, in Assisi, on theatre stages, in cathedrals and church halls; people bringing their fears, hopes, concerns about climate chaos and biodiversity loss to find a common voice, authentic language and shared purpose. Yet, in everyday life, the “dinner party conversations”, over coffee after church – or even in the liturgy and prayers – the reality of what’s going on can be smoothed over by “a socially-constructed silence” as Paul Bodenham puts it.

The words we use, the stories we tell, are important. As Molly Anne Sweeney of Wise Ram Theatre poignantly states: “We need stories to shape our lives and help us change, push despair and try to hope.” So what stories reverberate through our lives, informing and motivating us, and wider society too?

The news each day (give or take a few feel-good items) tells a dismal tale of the effects of our greed and selfishness in damaging and destroying the Earth’s life-support systems and a woeful

ineptitude to right past wrongs and find peaceful ways to live together. “Current policies put the world on track for 2.9°C of warming by 2100” says the UN (UNEP Emissions Gap report 2024) and describes how with further warming, climate change risks will become increasingly complex and more difficult to manage. Pope Francis in his 2023 encyclical *Laudate Deum*, regarding climate change, wrote: “our responses have not been adequate, while the world in which we live is collapsing and may be nearing the breaking point.”

This is the unpalatable truth, the detritus of our existence – and all contributors to this issue are passionate about not sweeping it under the carpet. It is a story of failure, of increasing instability and conflict. Can we be vocal about this situation that humanity has created and is creating, whilst offering an alternative vision? Didn’t Jesus come to bring Good News – even “Good News to all Creation”?

In the words of our poet, Maya Adams, do we have the courage in our heartbreak and grief: “to nurture a bittersweet glow of hope that can engulf the possibility of now

and tomorrow, and tomorrow’s tomorrow”

Our November conference will focus on how the Church, whilst still advocating for deep cuts in carbon emissions and biodiversity protection, must play a role in “adaptation”, in ways both practical and spiritual. As climate change potentially brings food shortages, excessive heat and cold, even social unrest – can our local churches be ready? As the chaos deepens, David Coleman also asks, can we be Christ’s beacons of unreasonable hope and drivers of spiritual resilience?

Our patron, Elaine Storkey also reminds us how hope is part of our identity as Christians, how hope is embedded within Creation and true hope is always aligned with love and action.

Is healing possible? Yes, the Earth has great powers of regeneration. Technology plays a vital role, but it is the human heart where change is needed most. And we have a story to tell about that too.

Come and join us on our journey from despair to hope!



Detail from Hope by Sophie Chartier @Sohako18



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