

Rooted and resilient; living with generosity and hope

At our conference last November, keynote speaker, Rupert Read gave a stark assessment: “we are heading straight towards societal collapse ...whether it comes from climate, AI, geopolitics, or most likely some cascading combination of these”. If you think he is being alarmist – with regard to climate and geopolitics at least – I urge you to watch the National Emergency Briefing videos (nebriefing.org/). These succinct presentations, given by international experts, set out the climate-related challenges we will face (and are already being faced in many places), unless deep-rooted change is effected very soon. On our current trajectory, societal breakdown is considered highly likely (yes, even in the UK), particularly in relation to crop failures bringing hunger and civil unrest.

Yet greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise, climate chaos increases, so how do we respond? How could deep-rooted change ever be achieved?

This issue of our magazine reflects a breadth and depth of responses. We might consider the problem too large and individual actions, of themselves, pointless. Yet changing our behaviour, argues Andrew Davison and, adopting low-carbon technological solutions as we are able, is important to bring positive change and “nudge” others through our example.

Lauren MacDonald writes of the importance of political protest. The Stop Rosebank campaign is pressuring government to make sure oil companies do not continue to drill in the North Sea. This depends on a vocal public, stating loud and clear, that fossil fuels must stay in the ground.

Surely these messages – lifestyle and lobbying – go hand in hand. They are not either/or. The actions we take; the words we use – whether in everyday conversations or in political engagement; the choices we make in how we spend our energy, our time, our money; these must all reflect the future we long for. Christians and churches have a vital role. Jesus said his followers must be salt and light, bringing effective change in the world, just as a few grains of salt transforms the flavour of food.

Peter Musgrave’s report from Bangladesh gives a snapshot of how rural communities are living with increasingly unpredictable flooding and rising river levels. They are coping (just) through practising neighbourliness and sharing know-how – vital community resources. Similarly, at the Peterborough conference, we discussed how church communities in the UK could respond in hopeful and practical ways as we together face the challenge of coming climate shocks.

The Sophia Course developed by Green Christian members at Worcester Cathedral aims to equip participants, combining theological reflection, outdoor worship, and a look at tricky issues around consumerism and the economy. The Magdalene Community Church goes into the woods, all year round, to worship God and cook food together, growing in community, learning from the natural world about living slowly with love and care. Because, as our first article outlines, trees can teach us much about living with patience, rootedness and interconnectedness.

Individually and as communities, can we put care and generosity at the heart of our lives? Can we, as Andrew Davison puts it, “be transformed by practices that re-form our loves”. For, to quote Rupert Read again: “This civilisational crisis is, at root, a spiritual crisis, a crisis of what we are living for, of what may be worth dying for, and of what most deeply is.”



Clare Redfern, Editor



Our cover image is called “Abundance; in the garden of the spirit”, by Amber Khokhar, an artist based in Deptford (amberkhokhar.com).

Amber writes: “my work looks to the symbols of the inner eternal world. The palm tree is a recurring motif, an emblem of resilience, growth, and beauty, the palm tree stands tall as a representation of nature’s majesty. Its elegant fronds reaching skywards mirrors our aspirations towards the heavens, towards a harmonious coexistence. The exploitation of this resource, often resulting in deforestation and ecological devastation, reflects the reckless pursuit of profit that disregards the delicate and phenomenal balance of our world.”