

Glimpsing the eternal

Humans are awash with sensations, thoughts and emotions; we can delight in stroking a cat, tasting a freshly-picked blackberry – sweet, sour or mushy; we hear the gentle murmur of the sea or a cry of pain. We can feel nostalgia, remorse, love and rage, weariness and despair; sometimes all at the same time. We search for meaning, for truth and long for recognition, desperate to find our place – but we trust in a heavenly home; we know ourselves as individuals, yet in relationship and affected by everything around us.

I'm struggling to understand how we could be replaced by Artificial Intelligence (AI) and human knowledge and experience reduced to a software programme; but jobs and livelihoods are being lost, screens too easily dominate our lives and experts warn of the dangers of AI "gone rogue". We humans certainly have an uncanny capacity for self-sabotage in our use of technology. In this issue, Sam Cliff outlines the huge environmental and human costs of AI, whilst acknowledging its potential for benefit; such a powerful technology requires developing with a careful rigour. As Pope Leo states in the recent encyclical *Magnifica Humanitas*: "technology is never neutral, because it takes on the characteristics of those who devise, finance, regulate and use it" (MH,9).

All our contributors write about the importance of relationship and

connection. Angela Gibson describes the restorative power of the natural world and being part of an encouraging community; both ground her and inspire her in her activism. A communion that sustains – with the divine, with other people and all of creation – we know that a chatbot can't offer that!

But how do we achieve it? Brother Sam notes the intimate attention paid to all that exists by St Francis of Assisi, who "listened for a harmony of praise of the Creator being sung by all creatures". And Olivier Messiaen, the composer of *L'Ascension*, which inspired our cover art by Ally Barrett, practised a keen attention-giving too, often incorporating birdsong motifs into his deeply reverential music. In paying attention, looking to Christ who shared the earthiness of our human existence, and redeemed all things on the Cross, can we catch glimpses of the eternal, like the bright flash of a kingfisher crossing our vision?

Encouragement found in sharing together might also be found within Green Christian, in our local groups, in online courses and workshops, and the Way of Life community (see our website to find out more). We are a volunteer-led organisation and depend on our members sharing their energy and insights.

Tanya Jones outlines how as people of faith, we might respond to a nationalist populism that increasingly

is co-opting Christian symbols for its own agenda. Her article suggests useful resources and provides a clear moral compass as we approach our conference in October: **Responding to nationalism: resistance or reconciliation** with guest speaker, Dr Jonathan Chaplin. See more details on page 21 and do consider joining us there if you can.

Unusually we have a short story in this issue, which, with no algorithms involved, complements all the articles beautifully. Climate writer Deborah Tomkins' story illustrates the joy and challenges of living with attention and care, and the power of hopeful collaborative resistance. The unlikely activist Emily has her own moment of ascension and I was left wondering what happened next in her story.

I hope this issue gives you inspiration and hope, and maybe helps you as you wonder about the next steps in *your* story.



Clare Redfern,
Editor

