

Where is your treasure?

asks **Clare Redfern**

"For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." (Matt. 6:21)



From left:
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Writing this at harvest time in the UK, I find myself reflecting how the village where I'm staying would once have depended almost entirely on the local harvest of vegetables and fruit, bottled and preserved with care, to see it through the winter. We can now easily buy imported fruit, wrapped in plastic, picked on farms in Spain, Poland, Israel. And this, avoiding the southern hemisphere, is considered the eco-option!

We've developed a way of consuming, a way of life, that's dependent on everything being cheaper, faster, more convenient: whether food, energy, goods or labour. And it's all too easy to turn a blind eye to the environmental and social consequences

As theologian Sallie McFague has said in critiquing consumerism, the environmental crisis we face has to do with "how we live" on a daily basis – the food we eat, the transportation we use, the size of the house we live in, the goods and luxuries we use; "the enemy" is the very ordinary life we ourselves are leading as well-off Westerners.¹

In this issue we look at those thorny questions that concern our money, the ways in which we spend and save, and how these can work either for or against greater social equality and sustainability

of the Earth's systems, whether this is at the level of our individual transactions or more broadly.

In her article *Buying a Better Planet*, Eve Poole stresses that our money has energy, which we can harness for good by wise and ethical purchasing. And individual efforts can be multiplied as careful investment of financial resources is taken on board more widely. John Anderson, a Methodist Lay Minister, gives an inspiring account of greening his Church: offsetting the community's carbon emissions through investing in energy efficiency measures, and a pioneering building project. He preaches eco-theology, which he defines as "worship as if Creation mattered".

Similarly, as Environment Officer in Leeds Diocese, Jemima Parker has developed a hassle-free way for Churches across Yorkshire to switch to 100% renewable energy suppliers, through using an energy bulk buying scheme. But this should surely be the norm for all Churches? The widespread success of the project in Leeds I believe was because Archdeacons (people of great power!) were involved in promoting and encouraging the scheme.

It will require a lot of leverage from those with power for the fossil fuel industry to make the rapid transition necessary to a

cleaner future. Here too, the Churches have an important role to play. Fossil fuel companies need to feel the pressure to develop cleaner ways of generating energy and Operation Noah's James Buchanan calls on Churches to divest from fossil fuels: can making money from the extraction of fossil fuels still be justified? Adam Matthews of the CofE Church Commissioners has given a reply, believing that it is as investors that they can exert the most influence.

We are called to cherish this beautiful Earth, which sings of God's glory, and learn to live responsibly, lovingly, upon it. It is hard to swim against the tide, and requires a re-ordering of priorities, even a re-ordering of our souls, for we recognise that, at heart, this is a spiritual condition.

As Benedict Bowmaker comments of the Soil, Service and Silence community at Turvey Abbey, "learning to live in harmony with the soil, with each other and to work the land as a sacred act, we teach people to become gardeners of their hearts."

Can we make our ordinary lives a bit more extraordinary? I hope you will find inspiration in this issue.

References:

- ¹ *Blessed Are the Consumers: Climate Change and the Practice of Restraint* by Sallie McFague, Fortress Press, (2013)