**The Diary of a Prodigal Parishioner 1:**

**A Journey Towards Environmental Concern and Climate Change**

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It is easy to feel overwhelmed by the serious nature of the world’s climate predicament and the Covid pandemic in our midst. It is also tempting to leave it to the ‘experts’. We see an excess of depressing information on television, including from youngsters like Greta Thunberg, but also we have several amazing eco giants in our midst at my church and in our community at large. How can an individual make a difference I wonder? However, I *do* believe we can - small acts multiplied by millions can, and do, change the world

This is an attempt to monitor my solitary attempt to change my profligate habits and to pass on any positive ideas I may glean on the way, whilst sharing with you potential pitfalls, of which I am sure there will be plenty!

I have only recently felt the need to change my behaviour. Widowhood and my deteriorating mobility, both are poor arguments or excuses for no action at all. In fact being alone should make change at home easier as I only have the cat to consult before instigating any significant changes.

Before starting this journey my previously elephantine carbon footprint had quite suddenly pricked my dormant conscience. It was thinking of my beautiful grandchildren, possibly facing the prophesied apocalyptic future for their world that was beginning to give me sleepless nights. Could I afford to ignore the warning and yet profess to adore these eight little people, with another due to be born?; Can I truly afford to ignore God’s biblical mandate to care and nurture for this wonderful world that he has bequeathed to us?

It took a critical remark from my young grandson Ben, in refusing to use the plastic straw I gave to him, firmly rebuking me with, ‘One rubbish lorry load of plastic enters the seas every minute Grandma! All the fish and whales and dolphins and turtles and coral are dying you know’.

That comment hit me hard and prompted my unsteady initiation amongst the eco bloggers and sustainability freshers, to begin a slow process of change in my behaviour towards my environment The information we all need to act *is* out there (also with the help of several green giants in church) for us to read, absorb and *do* something, however small, starting slowly, and picking manageable battles. I am far from a natural. Brought up all my life in an urban environment, in my early days without even a garden, I don’t aspire to living in a forest yurt, keep alpacas, hens or ‘The Good Life’ in general. That is far from my dream and I am not a natural tree hugger. But I do care for God’s world and His people

There is no silver bullet. Any personal change requires discipline, determination and planning. Perhaps by sharing my attempts with you will give me the necessary drive and commitment, and readers may learn from my mistakes and my occasional mini triumphs! I am reminded of the Parable of the Prodigal Son whose earthly Father forgave his excessive lifestyle, and I feel assured that our Heavenly Father will do likewise for us, if we start to make the effort.

My first New Year attempt to reduce my heavy footprint has been to begin to reduce and manage my domestic waste. We waste a third of the food we produce each year.

Firstly, I am trying not to buy more food than I need. I still sometimes forget I am buying for one and I buy for Johnathan too. It isn’t unusual to find a hefty pie and black pudding, untouched in my fridge. Probably online food delivery would help me plan ahead, and stop the impulse buy (the cut price cream cakes are really tempting) but 3 for 2 offers can often end up in my basket too. Secondly, I now put a smaller portion of food out for myself and freeze the remainder. I use my newly acquired kitchen caddy to collect any food waste, although the equivalent new garden compost bin is light and, being currently virtually empty, is prone to blowing around the garden in need of a stable, heavy base. (Note to potential buyers of these to buy a solid and not flimsy bin for this purpose) I note that we are encouraged to share our waste food, which I find strange, unless you are cooking for larger family groups, with possible significant left overs. I don’t throw many parties these days in my socially isolated world.

However, what does apply to me is that I am notorious amongst family and friends for being ‘over generous’ in portion size, especially puddings (my personal favourite). This behaviour most definitely being excessive, lavish and so definitely prodigal! I promise myself to re-examine this tendency in myself, before families gather again and trifles and chocolate cakes abound in plenty

I have a long way to go on this personal pilgrimage, but I feel I have sown the first seeds of change in some fertile ground. Let us wait and see next month. Green shoots maybe?