**‘I AM the true vine. You are the branches.’ January 2025**

I am finally attempting Veganuary this year. <https://veganuary.com/partner/greenpeace/>

Despite substantially reducing our meat, milk, butter and fish intake, my husband and I have come to rely more and more heavily on eggs and cheese. He is away this weekend so I asked him to hide the cheese before he left!

I keep reminding myself that in doing this, just for 31 days, my carbon footprint (typically 10 tons of CO2e - carbon dioxide or equivalent emissions - per adult in the UK) will be reduced by 100kgs. If I sustain that over the year, 1.2 tons CO2e will be saved. One tenth of my total footprint. Food production worldwide is responsible for approximately 35% of total world human-induced emissions. The Uk’s Climate Change Committee have recommended we all reduce meat and dairy by 20% by 2030.

Jesus’ metaphor of the vine describes God as the gardener who prunes the branches and cares for the vineyard to maximise the production of good fruit. Pretty plant based! However, Jesus himself is the actual vine, without which no branches (the Disciples and us) or fruit will grow. ‘Good fruit’ will result from us following his example and teaching, which was to love all creation. As the last verse of the poem below shows, the extraordinary development of our brains has given us power over the whole world. The natural world could not make it plainer that it is in crisis and of course, our existence depends upon the air, seas, weather and ecological frameworks that we humans are inextricably linked with.

Therefore, reducing the harm we do individually is a great place to start, through our transport, food and energy use. We *can* lobby politicians too, but that is slow work. Voting with our feet in big ways has impact, such as making our bank accounts and pensions work for the good perhaps

<https://justmoney.org.uk/church-action-on-banking/>

or travelling by train not plane on holiday

<https://www.seat61.com/trains-and-routes/amsterdam-to-berlin-by-train.htm>

or retrofitting our homes. Equally, going Vegan two days per week, buying eco liquids for our personal and household cleaning and lowering the thermostat by a degree in winter, are all fruitful ways to care, not just for everything that inhabits the most beautiful place in the known universe, but for ourselves and our personal spiritual peace.

Peace? Because traditionally in the ironically-called ‘developed world’, our drive has been selfish: to build bigger, dig deeper, exploit more widely both people and resources, oblivious to the impact somewhere else our clothes, food and travel have. There is no ‘good fruit’ borne from this.

Now we see that increasing catastrophic weather events, caused by human action, coupled with political turmoil, affects not just our access to food and energy, but the movement of peoples. There is less land available to feed more of us. We understand more that, even as some struggle to feed their families here in the UK, what we all do, eat and use (transport/food/energy) affects everything and everyone across the globe.

Therefore, although I occasionally yearn for a cheese sandwich (100g cheese = 1.6kg CO2e) …this crunchy little gem and hummus one (100g hummus = 160g CO2e approximately) is actually delicious too!

**The Earth** (final verse.)

‘Ah, you are so great and I am so small

I tremble to think of you, World, at all

And yet, when I said my prayers today,

A whisper inside me seemed to say,

“You are more than the Earth, though you are such a dot:

You can love and think, and the Earth cannot.” **William Brightly Rands**

Diana Chambers