

Eco-residents

The Bishop's Pastoral Letter for September 2019

Three words to put our house in order

Where were you at 21.17 (British Summer Time) on 20th July 1969? Like almost everybody my age or even older, I was glued to a television set, watching very blurry images of Apollo 11's lunar module touch down on the moon – followed a few hours later by the first human moon walk. And where was I at 21.17 on 20th July this year? I was in Lichfield Cathedral, for a celebration of the Eucharist beginning exactly 50 years to the day, hour and minute after that momentous event. We used Eucharistic Prayer C from the American Book of Common Prayer: At your command all things came to be: the vast expanse of interstellar space, galaxies, suns, the planets in their courses, and this fragile earth, our island home. Those words, written ten years after the moon landing, express powerfully both the vastly enlarged horizons which space exploration has opened to us, and at the same time the focus it shines on our own small planet, 'our island home'. Viewed from beyond, our earth looks both very beautiful and very vulnerable.

The recognition that together we need to care for this home of ours is an ancient one, as can see from three related 'eco' words, all of them from the Greek oikos, 'a house'. First is economics, literally the way in which a household is to be ordered. In Christian tradition, the 'Divine Economy' means in the first place the Incarnation, the coming among us of God as the man Jesus of Nazareth to recast and renew our relations with one another. In everyday terms, that momentous event of economy means that we have to look for right dealings, fairness and justice among us, and a sustainable use of our resources.

Then there is the word ecu-menical. In its deepest sense, this is not just about relations between different denominations of the church; it refers to all who dwell within our own home – that is, all the citizens of earth. The future of our planet belongs to us all, and it can only be saved by all of us together: as members of a worldwide communion, we Christians should of all people know that being part of a wider belonging is the only way to bring change in our divided world.

And third, of course, there is eco-logy. We have come to see, as never before, how fragile our world is, how precarious its survival, how great the responsibility laid on us to care for this, the home God has given into our stewardship. On 20th September this month, led by young people around the world, there will be a great day of mobilisation of Christians, people of other faiths, and all of good will to raise awareness of the challenges facing us, and the urgency of collective action to change our collective behaviour. Bishop Clive writes elsewhere in this Spotlight about some of the practical ways in which we can join together on 20th September, and as we do that we need to hold to the big picture. Ecological mobilisation,



Come follow Christ in the footsteps of St Chad

ecumenical partnership and economic justice go together as we commit to the future of 'this fragile earth, our island home', which God loved so much that he gave his only Son for its life.

+Michael