

St John's Eco- Congregation Policy ~ Joined up Thinking.



In 2009 we introduced our 'Eco-Congregation policy.' This states that we will increase awareness, in ourselves and others, of the issues involved with our working towards being an Eco-Congregation.

This led to our holding a day-long event which we called " - and Twelve Baskets Remained." We covered issues which impinge on the Biblical theme of justice, always with reference to the effects on the poor of the world. This year, we

have changed the title, as many found it too cryptic, to "Think Global - Act Local, if you want to change the world," and we held it at Gorsemoor Primary School, to increase community involvement and awareness.

The Challenges we face. A number of scientific experts have stated that the world is approaching a perfect storm: Climate change, loss of bio-diversity, (David Attenborough - 'we are entering an age of mass extinction,') ocean acidification, over consumption in the developed world, 1.3 billion in extreme poverty, (needing to increase consumption,) global freshwater use approaching its limit, damage to the nitrogen cycle, and waste of food and resources.



Two authoritative reports have recently been published which speak forcefully about these issues. The first is '**Resilient People, Resilient Planet,**' the report of the United Nations' Secretary General's High-Level Panel on Global Sustainability. The second is the Royal Society's '**People and the Planet,**' which addresses the links between global population and consumption, and their implications for the planet. This was introduced by Sir Paul Nurse FRS, President of the R.S.



Both reports refer to the Millennium Development Goals, (set in 2000; to be achieved by 2015) - the UN saying that we need to 'scale up' these targets, and the RS saying we should take opportunities to review and 'reframe' the MDG's. The UN report urges immediate implementation of the Secretary General's 'Sustainable Energy for All' initiative, with governments agreeing a set of 'Sustainable Development Goals' alongside the MDG's.

The UN also recommends that governments adopt a 'whole government approach to Sustainable Development,' involving all ministries in strategies, legislation and budgeting. They stress the need for an interface between scientists and policy-making. Tell your MP.

Population and Consumption. With world population at 7 billion and set to rise to 8 to 11 billion by 2050, the RS report says that it is imperative that we slow down population growth, but without coercion. Poorer countries have high birth rates. From our working visits to Nomsa



Lukhele's struggling community in Swaziland, Sheila and I have seen children dying through lack of access to basic health care. Swaziland has one of the highest infant mortality rates. While they struggle towards food security and better healthcare, they need to become confident of their children's survival before they can begin to bring down their birth rate.

The Royal Society states the fact that 1.3 billion of the world's poorest need to actually increase their consumption and to be brought out of poverty (less than



\$1.25 a day.) They stress that better education and health care for the poorest – often agreed but poorly implemented – need to be delivered. We must overcome all barriers to high-quality education for all the world's children – girls as well as boys. Birth rates fall in places where women are well educated. This is why our partners, Hands at Work in Africa seek to help the poorest communities with the three essential needs ~ food, health-care, education.

The Royal Society also recommend that developed countries – that's us – must reduce their unsustainable consumption. We need to reduce waste and prevent the deforestation caused by excessive meat production. They say that it is necessary to de-couple consumption from 'Growth,' and to 'fully value natural capital.'

I offer an African principle at this point: 'Ubuntu' – which is the recognition that a chain is only as strong as its weakest link. The most powerful country in the world will fall if it persists in believing it can grow in wealth while disregarding the poorest of the poor.



The real cost? The UN say there is a need to develop labelling which gives consumers information about the true costs of products. They say that governments should establish 'price signals which value sustainability and account for environmental and social costs.' For example, most people who buy bottled water are unaware of the social and environmental damage its increase in popularity has caused.

Dr Vandana Shiva is a physicist, ecologist and environmental campaigner who has a gift for expressing things succinctly. Here are a few statements of hers to think about and to try to match up with our understanding of biblical Justice:

'Buying more goods, and throwing them away sooner, is not having a better quality of life.'

'We must get rid of the illusion that we are separate from nature – conquerors of it. We are part of the Earth community.'

'By saving 'Nature' we are saving ourselves.'

'The world needs to seek 'ecological justice.' Land should be used to meet everyone's need, not a few people's greed.'



Geo.

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