

Goodwill among men.

The affects of global climate change upon humanity

We are once again at that time of year when we talk about “peace and good will among men.” It happens every year, we talk about it and become nostalgic, we romanticise about days gone by, possibly even hope for a better world with different values... and then we carry on living our lives in the same old way! Our concession to world peace and prosperity at this festive time is often not much more than remembering far flung friends with an annual Christmas card, and doing little about “good will”, other than of course supporting the Post Office annual bonanza!

But across the world people *are* working together to bring peace and good will among men. Make Poverty History has been an outpouring of people’s determination to see a more just and sustainable world, people from far flung regions of the world *are* working, together, to reduce the affect of global climate change.

Across the world a coalition of leading aid agencies, non governmental organisations (NGO’s) are working to fight poverty, and to fight climate change. In the developing world, where the two combine, they too are taking measures to reduce their carbon emissions. From highly advanced wind and solar technology to more simple measures people the world over are consciously beginning to work for a world with different values.

For example: In Kenya where less than 4% of the population have access to the electricity grid, small scale community hydropower schemes have been set up in remote areas as pilot projects. By replacing Kerosene wick lamps they cut the need for 18 tonnes of Kerosene each year, and the equivalent of 42 tonnes of carbon is saved. This scheme has now influenced national policy and contributed to the reform of Kenya’s’ new energy policy.

More than a third of humanity, 2.4 billion people burn biomass (wood, crop residues, charcoal and dung) for cooking, but traditional biomass fuels have drawbacks. Burnt in simple fires the smoke produced from these fuels not only is the fourth greatest risk factor for death and disease, but produces higher green house gas emissions than solid fuel. NGO’s working in Sudan, Kenya and Nepal have developed community energy saving stoves that still burn agricultural residues, but halves the amount of fuel wood needed by households and substantially reduces smoke and carbon emissions.

In Kenya and Zimbabwe low energy building blocks are now being made from stabilised soil. Traditionally locally baked-earth bricks were fired for 2-3 days in kilns burning fuel wood and contributing to deforestation whilst being inefficient in energy use. The new bricks are sun dried, can be made close to site to reduce transport costs, and are based

upon soil mixed with a little cement. The technology uses little water and produces no waste and helps to provide legal affordable housing in low income neighbourhoods.

Simple small steps in the light of a massive problem; but small steps that can be taken by everyone. Multiply them by the 6 billion people who live upon the earth and those small steps shared can add up to massive solutions. If they are doing this with limited resources, what are we doing here with our rich resources?

The steps we are asked to take in our sophisticated world are equally as simple, the reductions multiplied by our population equally impressive! The average house in the UK emits about 6 tonnes of green house gas a year, turn down your central heating by just one degree and you save a third of a tonne of carbon emissions. Turn down your central heating to say 65F/18.5C and you could save up to 2 tonnes a year.

Taking either the bus or train rather than your car cuts your greenhouse emissions by about 60 per cent. A commuter making a 30-kilometre round trip in a five-door hatchback, for example, will save 1.5 tonnes of greenhouse emissions a year by taking the bus instead. If you drive an SUV, you double that saving.

If you live in an average household, you will be chucking out around 3.5 kilograms of food a day. Two-thirds of this could be composted which could save you about 1 tonne of gas emissions a year.

Cruising at 8 kilometres per hour *below* the speed limit. on a 10-kilometre commute to work, you will clock up a quarter-tonne saving in greenhouse emissions over a year. Add to this the virtuous habits of avoiding short and unnecessary journeys, car-sharing and keeping your vehicle properly serviced, and you could cut your car's greenhouse emissions in half. If you happen to drive an SUV, you should consider more drastic measures! Emissions from a big four-wheel drive can reach 12 tonnes a year.

As the Christmas charity appeals come through our doors and strain our feelings of “good will among men”, it is possibly worth reflecting upon the words of Archbishop Desmond Tutu “It is important to understand that Africa and climate change are intrinsically linked, as climate change will affect the welfare of Africans for years to come.the richest countries of the world have a responsibility to help the poorest. This is not just charity but obligation. The world’s richest countries have emitted more than their fair share of greenhouse gases. Resultant floods, droughts and other climate change impacts continue to fall disproportionately on the world’s poorest people and countries. Many of which are in Africa”

Maybe at this season of peace and good will among men the simplest act of *reducing* our consumption this Christmas could be our most generous gift to the poor.