**How Green is God’s Mission?**

Some years ago, the Anglican Church spelled out what are referred to as ‘the Five Marks of Mission’. Almost every organization has a ‘Mission Statement’ these days, from schools and hospitals to big businesses and charitable organisations. They have all ‘borrowed’ the idea from the church, wanting to state clearly why they exist and what they are trying to do. The Anglican Church’s Five Marks of Mission look like this:

1. To proclaim the good news of the Kingdom.
2. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers.
3. To respond to human need by loving service.
4. To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation.
5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

At first glance it looks as if only the last of these has anything to do with caring for God’s creation, and it *has* been put last so maybe it’s the least important; maybe we should be ‘out there’ trying to convert everyone and bring them into the church; maybe we should be limiting our efforts in mission mostly to the human sphere. I think not. Let me try to explain why.

Firstly, our scriptures tell us that the good news of the kingdom is good news for the *whole* creation and not just the human bits of it. So, secondly, when we *are* teaching and nurturing new believers, one of the things we need to be teaching them about is God’s love for all of creation. Thirdy, if we are serious about responding to human need, then we have to be serious about recognising and responding to the climate emergency which is already causing so much suffering to our sisters and brothers in various parts of the world. Fourthly, we have to recognise the violence that we do to the natural world and to the other-than-human creatures with whom we share the world. Transforming unjust structures - such as those that have protected wealthy, polluting nations from paying the price of the damage caused across the globe – will help us to address many of these issues.

That final mark of mission is implicit within the other four: we can’t engage in our mission without ‘going green’. We have been called to take the good news of peace, justice, renewal and reconciliation to the whole world.

“Are we nearly there yet?” No, but the journey has most definitely begun. God calls us to announce the kingdom and to witness to its values – to be a sort of foretaste of it through the way we choose to live. That’s why the Church of England has set itself the target of getting to Net Zero Carbon by 2030. That’s why churches across the diocese register with the Eco Church Award scheme.

We are trying to change the way we think and act on everything from how we heat the church and manage our land through to the tea and coffee that we serve at church events. It’s all part of the ‘deep green’ mission God has entrusted to us.

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