**Everything on my plate affects you**

Diana Chambers

Christian Unity Week, a week of prayer, runs from 18th- 25th January and seems like a great opportunity to examine how our own actions affect our brothers and sisters across the globe. Does Veganuary seem a bit of a big ask to you? Well how about eating for Climate Justice instead?

As Katharine Hayhoe, a Christian who is a leading US climate scientist, said last year “Every bit of warming matters. Every action matters.”

You may respond “My life is relatively unchanged by rising global temperatures, thanks”. And ask “So who do my actions matter to?” This question can be answered two ways.

Firstly, for many of us we have been aware of climate related disasters, such as drought in Africa, all of our lives. Sadly, this has immunised us against compassion in many cases. It has also meant that the increasing numbers of droughts and floods in the world documented on our screens, attributed to Climate Change – still don’t make us feel directly connected and with any sense of responsibility. However, the second answer may give us more of a nudge.

Who do my actions matter to: the child gathering cocoa pods from deforested areas of Brazil, is doing so for my chocolate, made by Mars or Nestle; the press-ganged prawn fisherman in slavery on a Thai boat, dredging sea beds in our damaged oceans, is putting prawns directly on my plate; and the community in Kerala, India struggling to access enough water from local aquifers or becoming ill from the polluted remains, is because I like to drink Diet Coke.

Closer to home the businesses in Hebden Bridge, watching the water threaten their livelihood for the fourth time in 20 years, could draw a link between the increased frequency and intensity of rainfall and the extra methane in the atmosphere from my industrially farmed meat consumption. Or the carbon dioxide from my demand for fruit grown across the world and air freighted to my local supermarket, all year round, which is warming the atmosphere just that little bit more.

As UK consumers, we are still hugely influential: one of us creates emissions equivalent to two people living in China and thirteen people living in Ethiopia, where the United Nations says the drought ‘is the worst in recent history.’

Therese Coffey famously said last year, ‘We grow very good swedes in this country!’ True, swedes are not the go-to alternative for strawberries in January, but her point was an important one. We need to think of our actions costing not just air miles and emissions in production, but also, sometimes devastating other people’s lives, as they are unable to make a living in any other way.

The agricultural metaphors abound in the Bible, where we are both instructed to act with moderation and wisdom.

In Isaiah 28 God asks ‘Do those who plough for sowing plough continually? When they have levelled its surface, do they not scatter dill, sow cumin, and plant wheat in rows and barley in its proper place, and spelt as the border? For they are well instructed, their God teaches them.’

We hear Jesus telling the parable of the Sower and his seed, we become the seed itself and He tells us clearly ‘Let anyone with ears listen!’ Mathew 13.9. Having heard we need to act.

### photocomposition: act now written in the middle of the sustainable development goals color wheelHow about just trying to eat in season, British apples and pears are still to be found. Or try out a ‘Climatarian’ low or no meat and dairy diet a month. Always choose Fairtrade. For more informed consumer choices subscribe to the Ethical Consumer Magazine. Or check out the ten actions the United Nations offers that we can all work towards for a healthy planet at [www.un.org/en/actnow/ten-actions](http://www.un.org/en/actnow/ten-actions) .

### Making changes can be challenging, so I leave you with two prayers:

*God of blessings, the universe sings of your glory. Deepen our gratitude for all you have made and awaken in us a renewed commitment to care for the earth and each other, so that our common home may be healed and restored and all people, and generations to come, may delight in it. Amen*

(Adapted from prayer by Ecojesuits COP27)

*Lord Jesus, Who prayed that we might all be one. We pray to you for the unity of Christians, according to your will, according to your means. May your Spirit enable us to experience the suffering caused by division, greed and selfishness. To see our sin and to hope beyond all hope. May your ways be known on the earth; your saving power among the nations. Amen.*

Adapted from Prayer for Christian Unity Week