



Hope for the world

The Pilgrimage to Paris

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Advent hope and the pilgrimage to Paris on 6th December, which is St Nicholas Day.

St Nicholas was a great patron saint of children, of the poor and outcast, of sailors, of navigators. So maybe this is a great day to be thinking about climate change and our responsibilities.

I guess what's needed in Paris is for our politicians and diplomats to create ambitious, accountable and binding agreements that are going to take us forward – towards a low carbon economy.

They've got a difficult job – and they need our prayers and our support. We need to find ways of strengthening them and pushing them, so that we get agreements that are going to work for us and for the whole world.

I find it really fascinating, the way in which there's been an ecumenical consensus emerge over the last 20 or 30 years, and the Orthodox patriarch, Bartholomew, the Patriarch of Constantinople, was writing about green issues back in the late 1980s and 90s. He created a theological agenda which has taken root across the whole Church.

Pope Francis' encyclical 'Laudato Si' has had an impact on the world. It's addressed to all of us – not just Christians, not just people of faith – but to the whole world. It's about our common home. It's a great way of thinking about the world which we share.

And of course, Lutherans and Anglicans – Christians with an agenda to care for God's earth. For Anglicans, this is one of the marks of mission, this is integral to the Christian life, it's not a nice addition.

I think climate change is the big issue of our day. It impacts on the poorest of the world. It impacts on all of us, actually.

Lord Stern, who wrote the Stern Review, nine years ago, talked about climate change having a negative impact on our gross domestic product of between -5 and -20 per cent. That was

challenged quite strongly at the time. But Nicholas Stern said, looking back, he underestimated the impact.

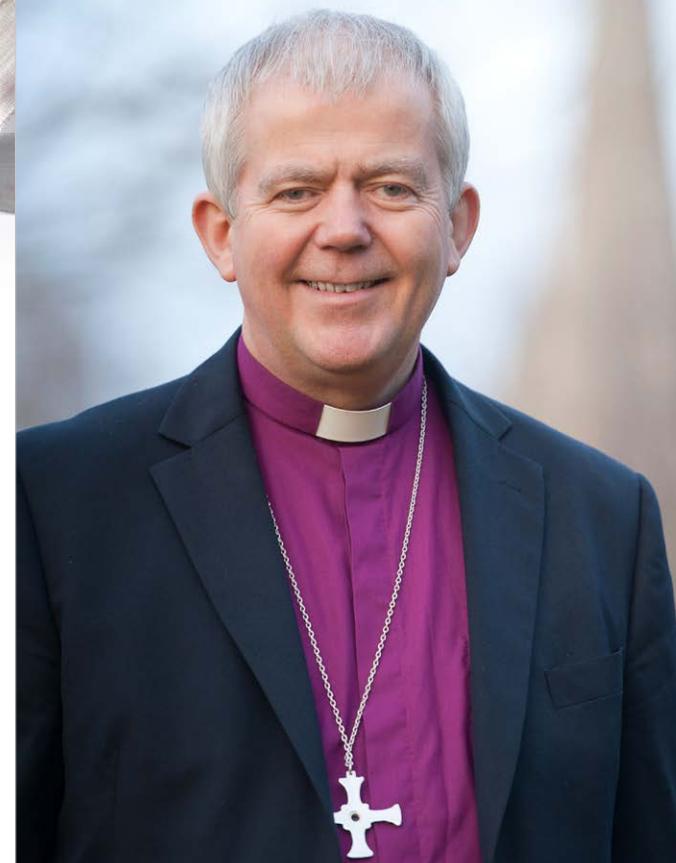
So there's a strong scientific consensus that climate change is happening because of human intervention. There's a strong economic reason for engaging. There's a strong Christian reason which has got ecumenical consensus. And here in Advent we ought to be seeking our Advent hope and working out how light shines in darkness.

On the road to Paris, we've been on a pilgrimage. Lots of people have joined the journey, not just physically coming to Paris – but by praying for the people in Paris. Of course, the most important part of a pilgrimage is, "What happens when you come home?", "How's life going to be different?".

The politicians need to create a policy architecture which is going to help us move towards a low carbon economy. Each of us needs to think about how we live more lightly on the earth – living simpler than others may simply live – actually thinking about our own carbon use, churches engaging with Shrinking The Footprint, reducing carbon emissions.

But it is our responsibility, and we can do things which care for the environment – the biodiversity, Living Churchyards – beautiful ways of creating a space that's educational and which uses the opportunities God gives us in our church communities to witness to the wider world. And it teaches the wider community a bit about how to care for the earth.

So, our Advent journey is one in which we experience judgement and hope – and we change our lives individually and together, and we ask God to bless us as we do so.



Nicholas Holtam has been a priest since 1980 and Bishop of Salisbury since July 2011. He is the lead on the environment for the CofE and chairs the Church's Environmental Working Group.

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A Rocha UK 18–19 Avenue Road, Southall, UB1 3BL, UK
t: 020 8574 5935 e: uk@arocha.org w: arocha.org.uk
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