

neighbours - with our global neighbours - and with the rest of creation. And somehow we need to cultivate a set of values and virtues as Christians that exemplify that, and that encourage a move away from the materialistic lifestyles that we're all surrounded by. And we can only do that together. We can only do that by encouraging each other, by challenging each other, and by listening to uncomfortable voices from the World Church - from those who live very differently from us, but who actually often live with great joy and simplicity.

[23] *Greta Thunberg wants us to panic! Is that right? Can panic ever be an appropriate response for a Christian?*
Dave, Ruth and Kuki.

DB: I personally don't like the term 'panic', but I can really understand why she, and many other young people today, are panicking when they think about the future. To me, as Christians our panic should always be offset, if you like, by our biblical hope. And yet it's an emotion that we may well feel - and I think if we feel it, we should name it. What I've been consistently encouraging Christians to do is, rather than to, kind of, just get annoyed by the uncomfortable things that Greta Thunberg is saying, is rather to listen to her carefully, because she is articulating what many millions of people around the world are feeling. And I think we need to listen very hard, before we stand in judgement at what she says.

RV: If we'd taken action twenty years ago, when we knew we needed to do so, we wouldn't be in the situation that we're in today. But we are, so we don't

panic - but we need to take it extremely seriously. We're living in a new normal. The world that we thought we were living in has changed. We are living in a world that is facing a climate crisis, and we have to live in the light of that, and in relation to that.

KR: Panic and fear, yes, because things are happening now that are spiralling out of control. And therefore we need to say that, yes, it is scary, it will get scarier. And therefore we need to be even more urgent in our response to God's call to care. We need to spur each other on with a little fear, saying: 'Yes, let's nudge each other - let's respond to God's basic call to care, to stewardship, because things are now spiralling out of control.'

[24] *Have our contributors ever lobbied their MPs? Did they feel it was worth it? Dave and Ruth advise.*

DB: Yeah, I've lobbied MPs on a number of occasions, and with mixed results. It's famously said that MPs react to letters that come individually, rather than just, sort of, mass letters, if you like. And that it only takes five or ten letters on a subject for an MP to think: okay, I need to do something about this. MPs are generally responsive. Most of them have gone into politics because they want to make a positive change. They all recognise that they need to keep on the right side of their voters, if they need to keep in office. So I think it is worth lobbying MPs. And sometimes you'll find your MP is intransigent, and just totally ignorant about issues around climate change - well, challenge them and say to them: This is what many of your voters are caring about, and this is the reality of

life. And if your MP won't listen, then we can always go to Parliament itself, and in a sense go above the heads of individual MPs. But, yes, I do believe it's important that we engage with our MPs, that we pray for our MPs and that we challenge our MPs.

RV: Part of my work at *Tearfund* is overseeing the advocacy, the lobbying, the campaigning work that we do here, and we know that lobbying our MPs does make a difference. We've seen changes in the investment they're putting into renewable energy around the world happen, because of our lobbying efforts. We know from *Tearfund*, and many other organisations, that the first Climate Change Act came in because of the lobbying of individual people - and many Christians were a part of that. So yes! And it's part of our Christian calling that we speak up on behalf of those who can't speak for themselves. And it's important as we look at these issues that we don't just look to put a bandage on them, but we ask why are they happening in the first place - why are people poor in the first place? And the answer to that is big systemic issues that we need our government to be tackling. So it absolutely, always, is worth lobbying our MPs.

[25] *And now here is David Clough with his closing reflection.*

What does it mean to follow Christ in a world on fire? The climate crisis is already causing rapid changes that imperil the lives of very many of God's creatures. Coming to terms with the scale of the problem is a challenge. Many people seem to be rushing straight from denial that the problem exists to despair that we can do

anything about it. But Christians need to read the signs of the times and take seriously what it means to be followers of Christ in days like these. We are called to hope, which means we may not despair, even when it's hard to see a way forward. It means we should be among the first to be prepared to change our lives to reduce our contribution to the climate crisis: rethinking what we eat, how we travel, how we use energy, and positively how we can contribute to a radical change of direction in national policy. And it means we need to be more attentive than ever to the needs of our neighbours: human and more than human. As the climate continues to heat up, many people will be driven from their homes and will need to seek places of safety elsewhere. Christians in the Global North should recognise their part in creating this crisis, and their responsibility for caring for its victims.

[26] Session 5 – Faith, Hope and Love

Desmond Tutu once memorably said: 'I am not an optimist, I am a prisoner of hope.' I asked our contributors what they think is the difference between optimism and hope, for a Christian? And how do they keep their own hope alive, when there seems to be so much bad news? Kuki, Dave and Ruth.

KR: I think, as a Christian it's all about hope. I know that our God is a God of hope. If you see trees that have been planted by people growing and thriving, that's a symbol of hope. Where birds have come back and are feeding, that is a sign of hope. And God is in the business of restoration.