



GO GREEN FOR LENT

WEEK THREE: MONEY & INVESTMENTS

Bishop Helen-Ann reflects:

When I became a Lord Spiritual I was asked if I wanted to take up one of the vacant portfolios amongst the bishops who have a seat in the House of Lords. I could see that the brief for the economy and business was available and initially thought 'not for me.' With a 'B' (in 'old money') for Maths at GCSE, I have never had a strong relationship with numbers. However, given the way in which economics affects and underpins so much of the decisions that are made that are felt 'on the ground' in our communities, this portfolio might present important opportunities in the voice that I have in the Westminster context, as well as relationships in the diocese with local businesses and the Chamber of Commerce (for example). In the thought-provoking book *Slow Church: cultivating community in the patient way of Jesus* (2019, IVP), C. Christopher Smith and John Pattison discuss the myth of the economy of scarcity and the impact of this upon churches and our mission mindset: '...the economy of the present age, rooted in scarcity, all too often holds our churches in a death grip: in the interest of survival we cling desperately to resources, sharing them sparingly, if at all, with others in need. Scarcity impedes our imaginations, compelling us to conclude, "We could never do that"' (p.160). The economy of God speaks of abundance, so perhaps the challenge for us is to inhabit the spaces in between and make choices that can nurture the change and transformation that is integral to the Kingdom of God (and then to say "maybe we can do that after all").

Since I took up my role as Bishop of Newcastle, I have been rightly challenged about the ethics of banking, and particularly of the episcopal accounts. While I cannot make decisions about the diocesan banking (this lies with the Diocesan Board of Finance), I do have agency over how the episcopal funds that I hold (in my diocesan role) are overseen. I have found that it is hard to change bank accounts, but persistence is key. I am delighted that we are now in the process of moving these accounts to a banking platform that does not invest in fossil fuels and is known for its focus on environmental sustainability, human rights, and social justice. Change happens at home first, a small step in the wider landscape but an important one all the same.

Prayer

*Faithful God,
Lent reminds us that change is possible.
Change in us, and change in the world.
Use our small actions to bring about lasting impact for those most in need.
Amen
(Church Homeless Society)*