



God's World, Our Business

Over the summer I have read two important reports. The first was a report by the Food, Farming and Countryside Commission set up by the RSA. That executive summary of the report starts 'Our future depends on the land. The land nourishes and supports us. It provides for our nutrition, our health and our wellbeing. Food and farming, depend critically on the fate of the countryside. Those who live and work here are the stewards of this relationship but the responsibility for it rests with us all.'

The report highlights the urgency for us to recover and regenerate nature; and to restore health and wellbeing to both people and planet. Decades of policy to produce ever cheaper food has created perverse and detrimental consequences. The UK has the third cheapest food amongst developed countries, but the highest food insecurity in Europe. It calls for radical change, the development of sustainable systems, an investment in skills and rural infrastructure.

The second report 'Counting lives' comes from the Children's Society. It highlights the exploitation of children for criminal gain, particularly through the 'county lines' model of distributing drugs around the country through the use of dedicated mobile phone 'lines' and called for statutory agencies to have access to appropriate resources to identify and support victims. There are some children particularly vulnerable to exploitation particularly those growing up in poverty, having learning difficulties, being excluded from school or a looked after child and there is increasing evidence that primary school age children are targeted.

All these issues are not just words on paper, but our issues, involving people in Wiltshire and Dorset. They involve God's world and God's children, and force us to look at ourselves and our churches to see what we can do. Both reports are shocking in their own way, they call for us to look outwards, to see with eyes of faith what is happening in our towns and villages, our countryside and farms, our economy and social provision and to speak and act.

I hope that as a diocese we can partner with others in taking forward some of the recommendations of these reports and contribute towards a better world and that as individuals and churches we continue to think about life around us and respond as we are called to do. Acting with care and compassion and speaking up for justice, equity and those whose voices are seldom heard.

+Karen