

### Transformative power of simplicity (w/c 17 March 2019)

*"Live simply so that others may simply live."* (often ascribed to Mahatma Gandhi)

Simplicity, at its heart, is a conscious stepping back from the inessential and which therefore allows a greater focus on the essential. While not a straightforward opposite, it certainly stands against the modern trends of consumerism which are often driven by a never-ending search for something that is 'just right' while (to quote Wikipedia) *"encouraging the acquisition of goods and services in ever-increasing amounts."*

The Good News translation renders Ecclesiastes 7:29 as *"This is all that I have learned: God made us plain and simple, but we have made ourselves very complicated."* How much do you recognise that trait in your own life and in society around you?

#### Read Matthew 6:19-21

Unlike some disciplines, simplicity is a state of being not something we do occasionally – not just a monthly declutter. What we actually do and say is driven by our underlying beliefs and values. In terms of your lifestyle, what do you think your words and deeds say to others about what lies within?

How do we balance remaining in our society - which is necessary if we are to engage with those living around us - with a resistance to the consumer ethos that dominates it? And turning those concerns inwards, how do we avoid bringing a consumer-driven approach to our church life?

Why should we not simply withdraw from society in a similar way to the Amish of North America? They are known for simple living, plain dress, and reluctance to adopt many conveniences of modern technology.

In Matthew 6:24, Jesus talks about the decision we all have to make between serving God and serving money: reflect on what serving money means for those who take that route.

#### Taking it further

Some of you may already be undertaking the Bishops' Lent challenge - *Living well in God's world* - <https://www.bathandwells.org.uk/diocese/bishops/bishops-lent-campaign/> Among the points it raises is that: *"We need to take care of our natural resources, be responsible with our waste and take care of our ecosystems, so that others may enjoy them."* Here are a few of the suggestions it makes:

- Walk or cycle rather than using a car for short journeys
- When shopping for food, look for things that are local, non-processed, less-wrapped and in season
- Always think about **reduce, repair, refuse, reuse and recycle**.

There are plans to form an eco-group at St James – see [www.ecochurch.arochoa.org.uk](http://www.ecochurch.arochoa.org.uk) Could you be involved?

*"Have nothing in your house that you do not know to be useful, or believe to be beautiful."*  
(William Morris)