



THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY



their congregations around the world.

Christ is Risen! Let the whole earth rejoice! Christians the world over join together once again in proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. This moment of history, many years ago, retains its eternal significance as the moment in which the shadow of death was lifted and the victory won. 'Christ is Risen!' is a simple statement. This simple statement sits at the heart of the Christian message. Some of the great examples of our faith, from the early Desert Fathers through St Gregory the Great and St Francis of Assisi to Dr Billy Graham, strived to base their lives simply on Christ and to live this out in simplicity of life. In this they serve as models for us all. Yet human beings so often make the simple complex.

During the season of Lent this year I travelled to Fiji to attend a meeting of the Primates of the Churches of the Anglican Communion in the Oceania region. The island nations of the Pacific Ocean are, more than most, paying the price of climate change. Sea levels continue to rise and threaten the lives and livelihoods of whole island communities. The threat of flooding is felt elsewhere too. In Lincolnshire and other parts of the East of England farmland is in danger of being overtaken by the sea. The effects of the human misuse of creation and the abandonment of simplicity for ever-increasing materialism are all around us.

The relationship between human beings and the earth goes back to the beginnings of human life. In the biblical narratives of creation human beings are given dominion over the earth. But dominion is falsely exercised if it becomes domination instead. The earth, created by God, supports the life of God's creatures. Raw materials from the earth provide our food, our clothing and our shelter. Interaction with the natural world enables us to see the glory of God in the wonder of His creation. In the words of St John of Damascus, writing in the eighth century, 'this creation, too, and its maintenance, and its government, proclaim the majesty of the Divine nature.' In the creation narrative God sees that the whole of creation is good (Genesis 1.31), and saw that it was good even before the creation of human beings.

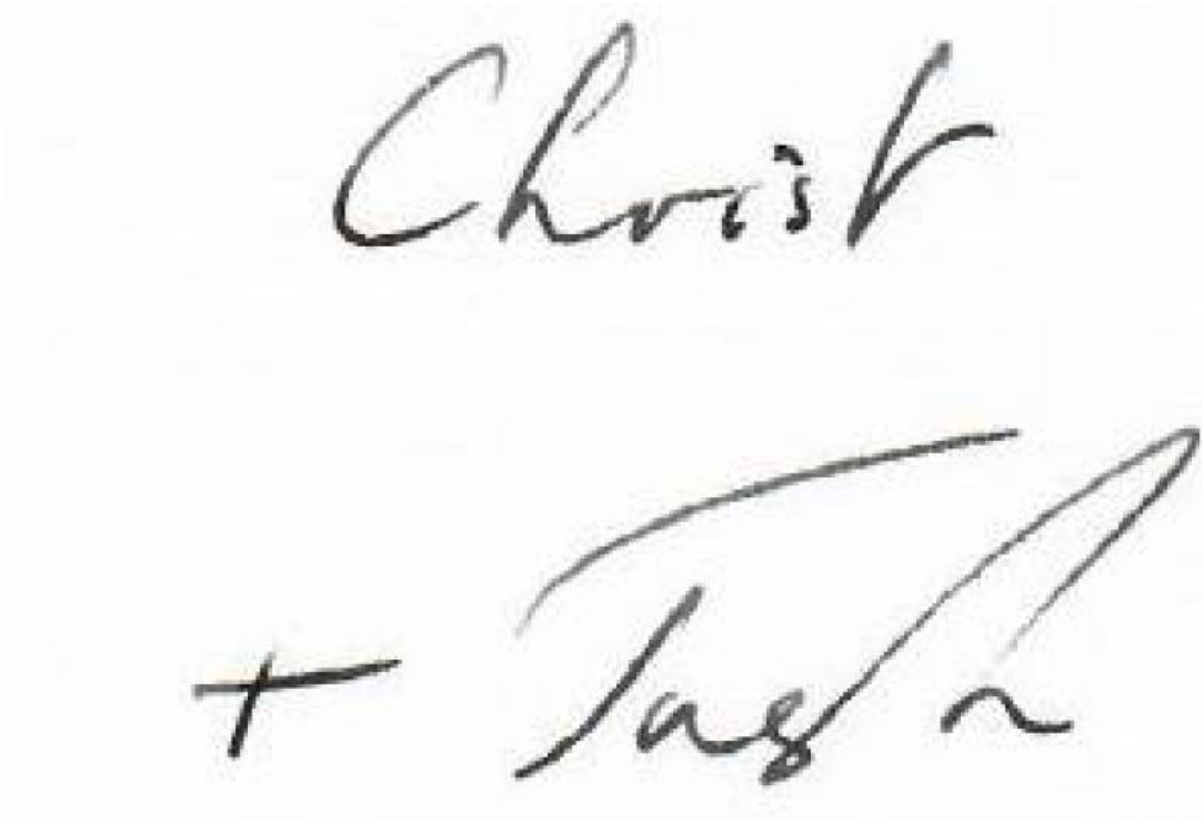
The dominion that human beings are called to exercise is one of stewardship. A steward is not the owner but one who is charged with overseeing and looking after something on the owner's behalf. Human beings are charged with caring for all that is created by God for and on behalf of God. This is a serious responsibility and churches all round the world are calling people to a renewed respect for the integrity of creation.

When we turn our eyes and minds to the mysteries of Easter the earth has a part to play in the story. It was on the rock of Golgotha that Jesus was crucified and in a new tomb hewn from the rock that his body was laid. It was from the earth that Jesus rose triumphant on Easter day.

Jesus Christ is the image of the invisible God and the firstborn of all creation (Colossians 1.15). He is the first fruits of those who have died (1 Corinthians 15.20) and in him we are a new creation (2 Corinthians 5.17). It is a simple truth that in Christ, risen and ascended, there is hope for the renewal of all creation: creation which, in the eyes of God, is very good.

May the joy of the risen Lord be with you this Eastertide.

Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!



The Most Reverend and Right Honourable Justin Welby

Archbishop of Canterbury

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