Emerging from the ‘COVID Cocoon’

“So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!” (2 Corinthians 5:17)

A CLIMATE Perspective

Presented by: David GREIG
Hi everyone, my name is David Greig and my career has been in teaching and writing School books about Biology. My perspective on emerging from the COVID Cocoon is an attempt to see what we can learn from this crisis that we might be able to apply to other situations and in particular to the ongoing Climate crisis.

So I have thought back over the last few months; there are some things that occur to me that have never really occurred to me before and this is an opportunity for learning. It occurred to me for instance that the most powerful thing I have done for myself and you have done for yourself in this Crisis is to accept full responsibility for my own behaviour, in particular regarding the way that I manage the distance from other people and the way that I manage my own hand hygiene so that I can avoid being infected by the virus. Not to mention setting a good example to others. And when I try to apply this principle to the environment I realise that again, my individual behaviour though infinitesimal on a world scale, is nonetheless significant; it’s not just about the way that we dispose of waste in our household but it’s also about what we buy; the packaging, origin and components of what we buy and I’m not just thinking about food. Consumers can actually dictate production.

Another thing that’s been reinforced to me is interconnectedness; not only how humans are connected to each other in direct and indirect ways but also how we are connected and interdependent with other species and indeed non-living parts of the environment. Although scientists do not yet know exactly the origin of this disease it is very likely to have been transferred from another mammal, there will be an enquiry and no doubt this will be established in due course. My studies in Biology have taught me that every living thing on Earth ultimately depends on every other living thing on Earth and furthermore that all species share the air, the water and also the changing climate and what affects one species or one ecosystem will eventually and inevitably affect all others. This is sometimes called the ‘Butterfly Effect’.
Another thing that has been most apparent to all of us is that many people have shown the **very best** in humanity; innovation, compassion, creativity and ingenuity that perhaps we didn’t realise we had. I’m thinking about the way that we have all learned to use our ‘spare’ time and also the technology to help with our communications. And again I’m thinking “what can we learn from this that might help us manage Climate change?”

So, you have heard a bit about my perspective, may I invite you to think about these matters and perhaps share them with a person nearby (or remotely) to see what you can learn and what we might be able to apply to our life together as a Christian Church and the ongoing Climate crisis.

**Summary**

1. Responsibility - individual behaviour matters
2. Interconnectedness – ‘zoonosis’
3. A crisis usually brings out the best in most people- we are essentially co-operative rather than competitive

**Reflection/Discussion Questions**

1. Describe and discuss some things that you have done/are doing differently, both individually and as part of a group, during the COVID crisis.
2. Are any of these new behaviours likely to be helpful for yourself or in any of the Groups that you belong to, in trying to reduce the rate of Climate change?
3. What ACTIONS are you/we actually prepared to undertake in this regard?
4. Would you find it helpful to express your thoughts and feelings in a prayer, a poem or some artwork?
So, I trust that little exercise was helpful, by the way there were no right or wrong answers! I certainly don’t believe that God has ‘sent’ the virus but I do believe that God can help us understand what is happening and learn from these experiences to both improve our own lives and the life of groups such as our Church as we plan to resume life under modified conditions.

So, let’s lift our eyes a bit now and think beyond ourselves and our Church and consider what is happening at Local and State and Federal levels; not only our political leaders but also our Health professionals, Police Force and so on. I am certain that you will agree with me that for our health and safety at least, there are not many better places to live right now than Australia. Compared to almost every other country on the planet, our rates of illness and death are extremely low, partly because our compliance with regulations is extremely high.

I believe that a large part of this is that generally people are prepared to accept the advice of our Doctors and other Health professionals who make recommendations to the politicians and lawmakers, who have explained it to us and in turn we comply and let us literally thank God for that. I believe that respect for evidence, the processes of Science and Scientists themselves have been absolutely vital in the way Australia has managed this virus.

I also believe that Australia was courageous in addressing the Causes (that is the spread of the virus) before they became too concerned about the Consequences (that is finances and the economy). Of course the economy is important, of course jobs will be lost, of course some businesses will ‘go under’ but my point is that we are in much better position because we acted promptly in a logical and scientific way to reduce the Cause before we started to focus too much on the Consequences. We don’t have to look very far around the world to see other countries who attempted to “restart” their economies before they had the disease under control with the obvious consequences of even greater economic damage, infections and deaths.
I believe there are some lessons to learn here about some of the Causes and Consequences of Climate change including extreme climatic events and the recent bushfires but of course with a larger scope and on a longer timescale.

The other thing that has really impressed me and I’m sure has impressed you, is the way that Governments have been able to put aside their differences and sit down, often remotely, to talk about the situation and what needs to be done and they have done it well and we are all very grateful. No doubt as this crisis passes, Parliaments will resume and politicians will once again start their bickering but at least we know it can be done, in case it needs to be done again, and it will! I’m sure that most of us have been involved in virtual meetings using ZOOM or video calls and perhaps we will realise that sometimes we don’t actually need to be physically in the room and quite a bit of business and politics may be able to be done in this way so as to avoid a lot of interstate and overseas air travel and in doing so reduce carbon emissions.

Anyway enough of my ideas, I wonder what you think about what we can learn from the way our leaders have managed this crisis and what we might expect of them in managing other crises including the Climate crisis. You may wish to consider these questions by yourself or in a small group (even remotely):

**Summary**

1. Listen to the medical professionals
2. Respect for evidence (research)
3. Trusting the processes of science and scientists themselves
4. Courage - addressing causes before consequences
5. Climate change - larger scope, longer timescale, more serious consequences
6. Politicians can put down their differences
7. Discovered new things - being in the same physical space not necessary for social contact; travel avoidance.
Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. What were some of the policies implemented by Local, State and/or Federal governments during the COVID crisis? Which of these do you think were most effective and why?

2. Which of these do you think could be maintained for the benefit and well-being of our State or Nation and/or in managing the ongoing Climate crisis? What can you/we do?

3. Would you find it helpful to express your thoughts and feelings in a prayer, a poem or some artwork?

Further reading

My advice is to pursue the facts and objective commentary; beware of ‘social media’ as a source of factual news!

These are some articles that I have read and would recommend to you.


https://arctic-news.blogspot.com/

About the Presenter

I have a long association with the Uniting Church and have been elected and served in various Executive roles in several Churches for most of my life. I am currently Treasurer of the Seacliff Uniting Church. I have a particular passion for Environmental Awareness and Action and am a member of the UCA Synod Environmental Action Group.

My training is in Secondary Science teaching and I have graduated with a B.Sc. and several postgraduate Diplomas. For the last 25 years or so I have also been involved in the writing and publication of School Science and Biology books.

I trust you find my ‘CLIMATE Perspective’ interesting and stimulating.

In Christian service, David Greig