

FROM RECOVERY TO FLOURISHING

Re-engineering the economy to delivery a just and sustainable future:

As Churches, we long for the flourishing of people and the wellbeing of our planet. As we emerge from the coronavirus crisis, we find ourselves at a critical moment where we could re-shape the economy to enable the wellbeing of all people and the planet.

Community is at the heart of our calling as Christians. Just as we see God embodying community in the trinity, we are called to live interdependently with one another and as part of God's creation. Without this interdependence we cannot experience 'life in all its fullness' which Jesus offers (John 10:10). We seek the flourishing of God's whole creation, so that all can experience that fullness of life. It is a sign of the Kingdom of God and of the covenant between God, humanity and all creation.

Yet our economy does not enable all to flourish. It is currently designed in ways that are damaging to both people and planet, and runs counter to this vision of flourishing to which we are called. Our constant pursuit of economic growth has led to a climate crisis and a degraded planet. Increasingly it does not provide what many people around the world need to thrive. The decisions we make about our economy are damaging our environment, leaving millions at risk and threatening future generations. As an interdependent part of creation, this harms each one of us.

This does not have to continue. The economy is not a relentless machine, but may be re-engineered. It can be changed so that its purpose is no longer to grow exponentially, but rather to enable the flourishing of both people and planet.

As we emerge from the coronavirus crisis, we will need to restart the economy. In the UK, the government will spend billions of pounds on stimulus and support packages in the coming months and years. Yet a recovery programme that is primarily focused on seeking financial growth and keeping businesses afloat regardless of the cost to the wellbeing of community and creation will not provide a long-term solution.

Instead, this is the moment to align our structures, systems and policies with the vision we share of flourishing and an economy which prioritises the wellbeing of people and planet.

The first step of this re-engineering must begin with decisions we face today about how we rebuild after the coronavirus crisis. Investment and new regulations must combine to ensure a recovery that is productive, inclusive and resilient. Decisions around government spending must prioritise the urgency of the climate crisis while also supporting and strengthening local communities.

This is what reshaping our priorities for the flourishing of communities and creation might look like:

- We can ensure that the UK economic recovery plan, **taxation and public spending is directed towards achieving net-zero carbon emissions.** Bailouts for business can be made conditional on business plans that are aligned with the UK's net-zero commitment.

- We can create **environmentally sustainable infrastructure**, using investment to prioritise immediate transition to net-zero emissions, and create jobs which support this process through reskilling.
- We can create **healthy, productive and properly paid work**. We can create new jobs and strengthen existing ones which recognise the value of work by paying the real Living Wage, and support work environments that prioritise health and wellbeing.
- We can prioritise **warm, carbon neutral and affordable homes for all**. We have seen that having a safe space to live is essential to our wellbeing. We can invest in the right kind of housing developments, and seek to ensure that every home is fit for the future.
- We can strengthen **renewable energy sources and infrastructure**. By investing in renewables and developing a zero-emissions power generation system, we can create energy that helps rather than harms wellbeing.
- We can empower **local decision making**, so that rapid, responsive and relevant choices can be made about how to rebuild at a local level.
- We can support **accessible, environmentally sustainable transport options**. We can prioritise modes of travel which are accessible to all, both physically and financially, create jobs and support healthy communities.
- We can commit to **fair and binding international frameworks** for reaching net-zero emissions and protecting the environment. These will hold us accountable for the part that the UK must play in addressing these global challenges, and will build on the existing UK support for multilateral international climate finance.
- We can ensure that our **diplomatic, international development and trade relationships** with other nations are aligned with our commitments to the environment and to human development, and give priority to the rights and wellbeing of people in the world's poorest communities.
- As we make these immediate commitments we must also look forward, envisaging how we can reshape our economy so that its focus is moved away from growth and towards flourishing. Currently, the central institutions of our economy, such as the Bank of England, are programmed to build the conditions for ever-increasing levels of production and consumption. Such endless expansion will have a severe environmental impact on present and future generations and weigh heavily on those who have least. **Economic levers must be redirected at enabling our economy to prioritise the flourishing of people and planet.**
- We must use both immediate actions today and our long-term decision-making to re-engineer our economy. By prioritising the wellbeing of people and planet, we can work towards a sustainable and just future where all creation can flourish

The **Joint Public Issues Team** represents a joint approach to public policy information, campaigning and advocacy on the part of several Christian denominations in the United Kingdom. It was formed in 2007 by the Baptist Union of Great Britain, Methodist Church of Great Britain and the United Reformed Church. <http://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk>