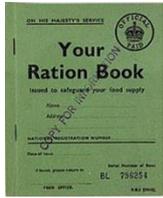
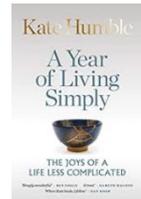


Thoughts from the Manse 12th February 2021

I have recently begun reading Kate Humble's book 'A year of living simply', subtitled the Joys of a life less complicated. It is strange how, on the one hand life is simpler in Lockdown because there are less things to do, and yet it feels more pressured and more complicated. It made me wonder what it might mean to live simply.



There have been many comparisons between the pandemic and wartime, especially the restrictions and the loss, and yet there is also an awareness that as a people we can cope in such situations. One of the features of the war was shortages which led to rationing and if you have watched any of the programmes that catapult a family back in time to experience family life in another era, you will be aware of how much less people ate during the war. We have become used to a banquet table of options, and at such times we do not know where to begin and so sample everything on offer. At an occasional banquet although not the healthiest option it will not do too much harm but when the banquet is available every day it has encouraged most of us to eat more than we need, and the results are obvious. It is a habit we need to break; the occasional celebration is fine but if we all ate a little less, we would be healthier, there would be less food wastage and we would perhaps appreciate the food we do eat even more.

Another example of the simple life that springs to mind is the programme 'The Good Life' with Tom and Barbara trying to be self-sufficient in suburbia. They wanted out of the rat race, but life was perhaps not much simpler, and at times it was hard. We all recognise that we should try and be more self-sufficient, growing some of our own produce, and many people keep hens and enjoy fresh eggs, but without moving to the country most of us cannot really be self-sufficient. That should not stop us trying to be more aware of what we buy, where it comes from, how it was produced and what it is costing the planet. Some years ago now the acronym LOAF was introduced as a guide to shopping, Locally produced – avoiding unnecessary transporting of food, Organic where possible – avoiding unnecessary pollution with chemicals, Animal friendly – being aware of how animals are kept and buying meat from high welfare sources, as well as products that have been produced without unnecessary testing on animals, Fairtrade – where possible buying the alternative that ensure the producer/farmer has received a fair price for their goods. It is all still relevant, if not more so these days and using our LOAF could make a huge difference to the planet.



If you have watched the news recently you may have seen the debates over travel advice, especially over foreign travel and holidays this year. As a people we have become used to the globalisation of our planet and the ease with which we can travel almost anywhere we wish. However, just because we can do something does not mean we should, and we are all aware of the cost to planet of most forms of transport. We should use travel wisely, and a bit like food, not overindulge just because the choice is there.



In her book, Kate Humble describes their off-grid holidays, a week in a cabin beside a lake, in the middle of nowhere, no mains electricity, and solar panels provide the power for light and a pump to bring water from the lake. Food is cooked on a fire, most hours are spent outdoors, and drinking water must be carried in cans from the standpipe in the nearest village, and heat is provided by the log burning which needs logs to be cut. There is no television, no internet signal and phones only connect in certain places outside and infrequently. It is about disconnecting in order to reconnect with creation. Not everyone could do the total off grid thing but most of us benefit from disconnection at times, unplugging from the ever-present connection and interruptions, the addiction to news and whatever form of social media you follow, and simply being with yourself, your partner and creation.



What could you change to help yourself and the planet?