**Bishop Martin Seeley writes…**

I wonder if the experience of the Covid Pandemic can help us now really engage with the climate crisis, a crisis whose consequences if unchecked will be many many times worse than the Pandemic.

We recognised with Covid, though it has taken longer in some countries than others, that we were all in this together, it was not “over there,” it was all of us.

And governments and citizens took the scientists seriously, and while governments were not consistent, and could be slow to respond, it has been acting on the science that has proved effective in saving lives.

Individuals and communities changed behaviours and practices, in some cases before governments issued rules or guidance, because people realised that changing behaviour would keep people, ourselves and our communities, safer.

And governments took extraordinary actions to enforce those changes in behaviour, and to direct financial and other resources to support a very different economy, one based on protecting people and supporting the provision of health and other care.

Are we ready to change enough to avert the worsening climate catastrophe by following what the science is telling us loud and clear?

Recently I had the unexpected opportunity of a conversation with Professor Julian Dowdeswell, the distinguished Cambridge scientist who studies the impact on glaciers of climate change.

I asked him to what extent he thought the one degree centigrade rise in temperature during the last century was due to human activity.

He immediately replied, “At least 80%.”

And, I asked, do you believe the current bush fires, floods and storms being experienced in different parts of the world, including here, are the result of climate change?

“Most probably, although individual events themselves have more local causes,” he replied.

The scientific evidence for the human impact on climate change is overwhelming, in both senses of the word: there is an overwhelming amount of evidence, and the effect on us can feel overwhelming.

Climate change has been happening since the earth was formed, but what is different now is that since the industrial revolution it has been caused largely by human activity, burning fossil fuels.

The rate of temperature rise has in fact doubled just since 1980.

A couple of weeks ago the United Nations “Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change” (IPCC) published its latest report, the collation of the work of thousands of scientists from around the world.

This report used far stronger language than previously to assert that humans are causing climate change: "It is unequivocal that human influence has warmed the atmosphere, ocean and land."

The authors go on to state that without deep and immediate cuts in carbon emissions, temperatures will rise more than 2 degrees above the pre-industrial levels by the end of the century.

That’s when children born now will be approaching their eighties.

The scientists conclude weather extremes will increase, including heatwaves, drought, and storms.

Even if the temperature rise is kept at 1.5 degrees, sea levels will still rise 2-3 metres, and maybe more.

In the face of this evidence we are of course acting, but far too slowly, and barely with any sense of life-and-death urgency.

Governments declare their intentions, but then don’t always follow through.

Alok Sharma, the minister in charge of the global climate talks to be held in Glasgow during November, has described the situation as “catastrophic”

“I don’t think there’s any other word for it. You’re seeing on a daily basis what is happening across the world. Last year was the hottest on record, the last decade the hottest decade on record.”

Except he then insisted the UK would carry on with fossil-fuel projects, including licensing new oil and gas fields, the very fuels that are causing the catastrophe.

So what is it going to take to really change our behaviours?

The great majority of us are taking steps, modest steps. The Church of England in Suffolk is committed to a zero-carbon target by 2030 and many parishes have joined an “eco-church” programme to reflect their active commitment to change.

These are steps, and they may seem ambitious, but like our response to the pandemic, we need to be taking collectively and globally much bolder steps to make the difference that is needed.

There is a simple and powerful impulse to act: to protect the planet, for the sake of life including the lives of every precious human being now and in the generations to come.

We may be beginning to recognise the need to act together, to follow the science, particularly as extreme weather events pound the western United States, Germany, and indeed this country, adding to the experience of climate change long recognised at the poles and in regions closer to the equator.

During the pandemic the rules and guidance about personal behaviours have clearly saved many lives – I believe we now need something similar to help us act responsibly in relation to the climate crisis.

We also need an economic and political turn around that will put protecting the planet – and the global population first.

Working together, following the science, and recognising the need for drastic change is the solution again.

We can do this – we know we can – but we need to act now, for our good, and the good of our children’s children.