Growing up as technology has developed has meant that I have lived with an information overload for as long as I remember. Twitter tells me what’s going on in the world, and what people are doing about it, Facebook shows me too many articles about anything you can think of which are shared based on a clickbait headline without it even being read and now Tiktok is taking over, with short videos about more topics that you can even comprehend – both good and bad.

So, when climate change started being a real threat, I was well aware of it. The figures from scientists, the activists working to show governments that they care about our future and are unhappy with how it is being handled and those in positions of power who would rather deny the facts and pass the blame just so they don’t have to deal with it because it’s ‘fake news’.

When I was walking down Abbeygate street after work I saw a sticker on the back windscreen of a car saying ‘#f\*\*\*greta’ on it, only with no asterisks. There is a positive in that Greta’s name is so easily recognised and well known, instantly bringing her work and passion to mind, but I felt that it perfectly summarises some people’s attitude to the long-term crisis we are currently facing. I’ve seen my own friends and family share or write posts about Greta; posts that anyone who followed her work would know that they were taken completely out of context to promote the idea that she is foolish or not who she says she is.

While many seem to not agree or simply not like Greta (and find every excuse to ridicule or criticise her), what I find the most interesting is that it has taken a teenage girl to stir up a conversation that has been ignored by many for so long. Greta played no part in the accelerated climate change but has taken it onto herself to play a part in saving her future.

In some cases, this information overload has led almost to a sense of hopelessness. It’s hard to know what to do when everyday you are being told that more ice is melting, and glaciers are disappearing; that landfills continue to grow, full of single-use plastic items and excessive fabric from the fast-fashion industry; that in some cities the effects of running is almost obsolete due to the pollution you’ll be breathing in. On the other hand, every Friday my twitter feed fills with retweets of school age children striking for their future all over the world. In the past couple weeks this has turned into online striking – these young people are taking responsibility and promoting social distancing while continuing their presence, showing that they will not give up.

While I am inspired by those who are partaking in the ‘Fridays for future’ movement, it is a reminder that I have to consider how this extreme climate change is going to impact my future. For the past couple of years, I’ve been applying for university, not succeeding the first time, doing my a-levels then studying and training to be a reader in my gap year while applying for university again, all causing me concerns about what my future will look like – and this has been affected again in the last few days. But when I read about the fact that if global temperatures continue to rise, this will have disastrous impacts on all aspects of life – potentially dangerous weather patterns, food insecurity and negative impacts on health - those concerns seem to be much smaller in comparison. One of the biggest decisions I believe I will have to face is whether I want to bring children into a world where this seems to be the future they will be growing up into.

While there is a long way to go, there is still hope in the work that is already being done. The Paris Agreement and International Summits show that governments are in conversation about extreme climate change and the affects that it is and will have. I’m sure you’ve also noticed the increase in ways that we as consumers can try and help in our daily lives – sustainable clothing, plastic free products and encouragement to reduce our use of single-use items. But even that can be difficult as many companies have capitalised on this, resulting in ‘green-washing’; a new term that is defined as the process of conveying a false impression or providing misleading information about how a company’s products are more environmentally sound, all in the name of profit.

So, what can be done? It’s undeniable that the largest corporations and businesses are also the largest contributors to the causes of climate change and general damage to the earth such as water and air pollution. We can encourage that these companies are brought to account for these continuing actions and stop supporting them if possible. For example, switching to not buying fast-fashion clothing or electricity suppliers that use renewable sources. This way we are voting with our money for companies that have a better future in mind. In our own daily lives we can reduce the amount of meat in our diets, and consider switching to plant-based milks. Not only is the meat and dairy industry a massive contributor to climate change, but it will help us to be healthier too. In this time of uncertainty and great disruption, the reduction of car use in the countries that have completely locked down has caused a great improvement in terms of pollution. The air pollution in China has drastically decreased and there are pictures of clear waters in Venice, with fish and swans populating the Canals. Although we can’t just stop living our lives to combat climate change, this is proof that change will work.

Apart from the bible app on my phone the Bible I use most frequently is ‘The Green Bible’ which I share with my mum. It’s made from sustainable resources but more importantly for me, it highlights in green any passage that is to do with creation or creation care. Obviously the first few chapters of Genesis are highlighted but even thumbing through, every few pages has either a couple of verses or whole passages that are highlighted green – it opened my eyes to just how interlinked God’s work and words are to our world and the care of it. It’s all too easy to forget that God is creator as well as redeemer. More recently I’ve learned about the five marks of mission in the Anglican Communion, mainly through my work as part of my reader training. We are called to proclaim the good news of the gospel, teach, respond to human need and transform unjust structures of society and pursue peace, all of which are relevant to environmental action; but most importantly we are called to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth. Genesis tells us that God has given us dominion over all the earth, including all animals and plants, God has made us stewards of His creation, so we must accept our call to protect it.

But what do the impacts of the accelerated climate change mean for the future of the Church? We only need to cast our minds back a few weeks ago, which may have completely slipped our minds due to our current situation. Storm Dennis, Storm Ciara and Storm Jorge came in succession in February which undoubtably came as a wake-up call to how increased temperatures can cause more extreme weather patterns, and that they affect everyone. Flooding was seen across the country causing damage to homes and other buildings, school closures and general disruption to travel and our ability to go about our day-to-day lives. If this pattern continues it could mean that many of our churches will face structural damage due to heavy rain and flooding. This will cost large amounts of money to repair and may also mean the loss of history that is contained in each of our buildings. But we may also be looking at a future where we can no longer worship in the churches that Christians have for centuries before us due to constant irreparable damage and unsafety in our current buildings.

We as Christians should be at the forefront of the fight against accelerated climate change, with the knowledge of our calling to protect God’s creation. The Cathedral is working towards this with our youth group encouraging the stopping of the use of single-use cups when we can return to worship and coffee after our services, and having an eco-church status, but there is always more we can do. We can support local organisations who are campaigning for a better future or are providing services that are more sustainable and will reduce further impact. Many who protest will face opposition, as is shown by the many who are not afraid to ridicule Greta and the many schoolchildren who are taking action for their own future, the support we give will encourage them to continue as well as show who’s side we are on. But it’s important that we not only work within our own community to help face this crisis, but to ensure that the government knows that we want more done about it. If the large majority of our congregations were writing and talking to our local MP about our concerns, it would be pretty hard to ignore. Mostly importantly, we need to pray, and pray regularly. God hears us always, but through prayer we can show our appreciation for His creation and ask for His help as we endeavour to protect it.

As a young Christian, who hopes to have a role in the Church in the future, I sometimes wish that this future was a little bit more secure. I had very little impact in where the world is now, but I know that the responsibilities is gradually shifting into my hands. The question I have to ask myself and God are quite different to what I may have done if I was born a decade or too earlier, but I know that I was born now for a reason. I’ve known as long as I can remember that climate change was a threat, being told to turn off the tap when I brush my teeth, and to put a jumper on instead of turning up the heating since I was in primary school, and it’s likely that it will never go away. God’s creation is important to everyone, and it’s our responsibility to look after it.