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A 'simple' life is the way to go

Pundits tell us the recession is over, however precarious the recovery. Although it will take years to repay the enormous debts incurred by the government in bailing out the banks, and although unemployment figures will continue to rise, it appears we can begin to loosen our belts.

Good news? Not unless we learn lessons from the crisis. Not just about bankers' houses but in dozens of ways in which the environment and our lifestyles have benefited from the period of restraint. One third fewer cars on the road; a significant trend towards saving; an increase in recruitment among teachers, many from the financial services sector; reduction in airline flights - the list is a long one.

The recession in at least one country, Russia, has seen its carbon emissions reduced below its 1992 (Kyoto Agreement) levels.

It is, of course, difficult to stomach the fact that some of these trends mean that people have lost their jobs and that developing countries have difficulty exporting to richer markets.

As the economy gathers speed again, let's hope that jobs are restored and markets recover. Let's also hope the new economy will be a lot more responsible than the last.

In particular, that we as citizens (and Christians) learn to live simpler lives, not reverting to the crazy borrowing levels which caused the crisis in the first place, nor to the exorbitant consumerism which that credit made possible.

Let's hope we can drive and fly less, recycle more and perhaps reduce the gap between low and high incomes which is now higher in Britain than for many decades. There is, surely, virtue in living simply.