

Circuit Service September 27th 2020

Welcome to today's service. This time of year is known by many churches as Creation Time and is when we would normally be thinking of celebrating Harvest Festival. I know that some of you are still planning for this and I understand that next week's zoom will be a Harvest service but in any case we can still give thanks for God's generous provision by making extra gifts to the food bank collection point at our local supermarket. However, for me Creation Time is much more than Harvest Festival, it is about appreciating the whole of God's creation and how we understand our responsibility for the world around us. A majority of the prayers this morning are taken from the MWiB resource "Living in tune with our planet" and from the Iona Community.

Call to Worship: The earth is the Lord's and everything in it. The earth is the Lord's, the work of his hands; The earth is the Lord's and everything in it. And all things are made for his glory.

So let us Praise the Lord as we sing;

[Hymn: For the beauty of the earth.](#)

[StF 102: HP 333](#)

1. For the beauty of the earth
for the beauty of the skies,
for the love which from our birth
over and around us lies.
Gracious God, to you we raise
this our sacrifice of praise.
2. For the beauty of each hour
of the day and of the night.
hill and vale and tree and flower
sun and moon and stars of light;
3. For the joy of ear and eye,
for the heart and mind's delight,
for the mystic harmony
linking sense to sound and sight.
4. For the joy of human love,
brother, sister, parent, child,
friends on earth, and friends above,
pleasures pure and undefiled.
5. For each perfect gift and sign
of your love so freely given,
graces human and divine,
flowers of earth and buds of heaven.

Words: Folllott Sandfor Pierpoint
(1835-1917)

Prayers of adoration and thanksgiving

Lord of life we come before you now to give you our thanks and praise.

Generous Creator, we look in amazement at the earth, our planet and home.

From the beauty of snow-capped mountains to the vastness of the oceans,

from the largest trees of the Amazon to the smallest flower,

the wide diversity of creatures from tiny insects to the largest mammals,

from plankton in the seas to the huge whale sharks;

all speak of your creative power.

Generous Creator, Lord of Life; We praise and adore you.

Loving God, we gaze at the night sky with wonder in our eyes
as we consider the vastness of the universe and our place within it.
Yet through your son Jesus Christ our Redeemer,
we know that you care for each and every part of your creation,
and that in your great mercy and love offer to us the gift of Life everlasting.

Christ, Redeemer and Lord of Life; We praise and adore you.

Spirit of God, moving over the waters of creation and ever present with us now,
motivating, guiding and stirring us to action,
comforting, blessing and offering peace which is beyond our understanding.

Holy Spirit, Creator, Redeemer and Lord of Life; We praise and adore you. Amen.

Prayer of Confession

Lord, we confess that across the nations we have not always been good stewards of your creation,
enjoying life in the present time without considering the implications for future generations.

Lord, forgive us and help us to know your will.

Lord, we look around the world and see the damage caused to rainforests, rivers and habitats,
often simply for financial gain, leading to irreversible damage and possible extinction of rare
species of plants and animals.

Lord, forgive us and help us to know your will.

Lord, we are aware of the increasing effects of pollution and climate change upon the poorest of
the world's communities; plastic waste which pollutes both land and sea, droughts leading to crop
failures and floods which devastate homes and families.

Lord, forgive us and help us to know and do your will.

Lord, forgive us for taking your creation for granted, for failing to be good stewards and misusing
your great gift of life on earth. Help us to consider those who are affected most by the choices we
make. Help us to love and serve one another as you have loved us.

In Jesus' name we pray Amen.

The Lord's Prayer.

At our Synod gathering last Saturday Andrew de Ville used this next hymn as a prayer

Hymn: Community of Christ. StF 681

(Alternative: HP 350. Praise and thanksgiving.)

1. Community of Christ,
who make the Cross your own,
live out your creed and risk your life
for God alone:
the God who wears your face,
to whom all worlds belong,
whose children are of every race
and every song
cry out for justice and for peace
the whole world round:
disarm the powers that war
and all that can destroy,
turn bombs to bread and tears of
anguish
into joy.
2. Community of Christ,
look past the Church's door,
and see the refugee, the hungry,
and the poor.
Take hands with the oppressed,
the jobless in your street,
take towel and water, that you wash
your neighbour's feet.
3. Community of Christ,
through whom the word must sound-
4. When menace melts away,
so shall God's will be done,
the climate of the world be peace
and Christ its Sun:
our currency be love
and kindness our law,
our food and faith be shared as one
for evermore.

Words: Shirley Erena Murray (b. 1931)
Music: Hebrew melody.

Readings: Psalm 8

Matthew 10:29-31

Sermon

My youngest grandson, Toby, aged 3 has struggled with hearing problems which have affected his speech and social interaction. After investigations the doctors have diagnosed a severe case of glue ear and have said that he should have grommets fitted. The operation was scheduled for March but of course didn't happen and although the doctor said that as he grew his hearing might improve an operation was still the best bet. One day earlier in the summer he was out walking with the dog and his mum when he stopped and asked "what's that noise?". Nic couldn't hear anything unusual but he kept repeating the question. She suddenly realised that for the first time he was hearing the birds singing and when she explained what it was, his face lit up and he kept stopping to look for the ones who were making the noise. Nic said he was so excited that he was bouncing. When was the last time we looked at the natural world with such a sense of wonder and surprise? How much do we take God's wonderful creation for granted? It seems to me that we have lost our sense of connectedness to the earth itself. When was the last time you walked barefoot on the grass? I used to go to a retreat centre at Highmoor Hall and on several occasions we did circle dancing. In good weather we would go outside and dance on the grass. Dancing

barefoot was a totally different experience. The busy lives that many are forced to lead give little time to spend enjoying the world around us and appreciating nature and I am reminded of a poem by William Henry Davies which used to be used to advertise a well-known holiday resort and which begins "What is this life, if full of care. We have no time to stop and stare." Lockdown has given us that time to stop and stare, free from the pressure of meetings and appointments, we have been given God's gift of time and the good weather to enjoy the beauty of his creation whether we can get out into the countryside or just into our gardens.

Over the last few months I have been delving into the Psalms, as an ex-Anglican I was familiar with some of the more well known ones through the liturgy but this was the first time that I have really prayed my way through all of them in the order they are given in the Bible. I found it surprising to discover just how many of the Psalms deal with the natural world. Just as in the opening chapters of Genesis, the Psalms proclaim that the earth was brought into being by the will and word of God and that he delights in all that he has made. They also show us that God didn't just create the world and hand it over to humanity but that creation still belongs to the Creator who loves and cares for all that he has made and wants the best for everything and everyone. The earth is only ours on loan and we have been given the responsibility to love and cherish it not just for ourselves but for all the generations that will follow us. It seems to me that over the centuries we have failed disastrously to do what was required of us, we have depleted the earth of its limited minerals, destroyed flora and fauna and polluted the environment, all in the name of progress, mainly for the advantage of the developed world and to the detriment of the poor.

In this era of climate change and global warming we need to rethink our actions both as nations and as individuals. This has led Pope Francis, in the light of the pandemic to declare "The health crisis that humanity is currently experiencing reminds us of our fragility. We understand to what extent we are linked to one another, part of a world we share and that mistreating it can only have serious consequences, not just environmental, but also social and human."

The psalms also link creation with the continuous praise of God and show that all created things are in existence to bring glory to the Creator. "Let the rivers clap their hands, let the mountains sing aloud together before the Lord" (98:8-9) All creation, both animate and inanimate, is called to praise the maker. In Psalm 8, which we heard earlier, the author is over awed by the splendour of creation around him and is amazed that God should allow humanity with all its failings to have guardianship of the planet. All around us creation with all its beauty and terror calls us to have a sense of proportion and we are drawn into wonder at the world surrounding us. We are called to behave in ways that respect the integrity of the world that God has made, in all its diversity.

Growing up as he did in first century Palestine Jesus was no stranger to the land and made many references to the earth. Many of his stories are about farmers, vineyards or sheep and we are told of the way he controlled the wind and waves. During his life he sought always bring glory to his Father and always pointed to him. He wanted to show us how much we are loved and valued by God and often used the natural world in his illustrations, talking of the lilies of the fields and birds of the air and here we have the humble sparrow. God is so bound up in his creation that he knows when even the smallest bird dies and he knows the tiniest of details about us, Jesus tells us this shows how much we are loved and valued by God. Tony Bell, last week, shared his thoughts on

Psalm 139 which tells us that God knows not only everything about us but that also we can't hide anything from him and he still loves and values us. We need to remember that all humanity are equally valued, there are no creeds or colours in God's eyes, he wants the best for all. Just looking through my paper this week, there are many stories of people who, apart from those affected by the pandemic, are suffering, there are arguments over what should happen to those who have risked their lives crossing the channel in small boats and the treatment by the Greek government of the refugees whose camp on Lesbos was burnt down a fortnight ago. There are many others who are struggling with injustice, poverty and living in fear of their lives, what can we do to help them? All are part of God's creation and we are called to respect all and do what we can to fight for them, to bring peace, justice and care to those who suffer in whatever way we can. God's will for all his creation is for a life of peace and justice, and for all to know his love and care.

As some of you may know I am an associate member of the Iona Community. This worldwide, ecumenical community, based in Glasgow, is probably best known for its work on the Island of Iona and for its worship resources produced by the Wild Goose Worship Group. Probably less well known is its commitment to working for justice, peace and the wholeness of creation. As an associate my name appears on the prayer list four times a year and I always receive an email to remind me. The latest date was August 25th and a member of the Prayer Circle sent me this prayer which I will close with now.

God of gardens, we never noticed before

God of time, we didn't know we had

We give thanks for weeks of renewal

for changes of scenery

for hours set to a different clock.

We rejoice in the eyes we have to see

this beautiful, hurting world again.

We pray that as we return to scheduled patterns

we will continue to note

the realms of glory all around us

the saints who have struggled on

and the joyful, urgent work we have to do.

Amen.

[Hymn: For everyone born.](#)

(Alternative StF 696: HP 402 For the healing of the nations.)

1.
For everyone born, a place at the table,
for everyone born, clean water and bread
a shelter, a space, a safe space for growing.
for everyone born a star overhead.
And God will delight when we are creators of

justice and joy.
Yes, God will delight when we are creators of
justice and joy.
justice and joy.

2.
For woman and man, a place at the table,
revising the roles, deciding the share,
with wisdom and grace, dividing the power,
for women and man, a share that is fair.

3.
For young and for old, a place at the table,
a voice to be heard, a part in the song,
the hands of a child in hands kind and
wrinkled,
for young and for old, the right to belong.

4.
For just and unjust, a place at the table,
abuser, abused, with need to forgive,
in anger, in hurt, a mind-set of mercy,
for just and unjust, a new way to live.

5.
For everyone born, a place at the table,
to live without fear, and simply to be,
to work, to speak out, to witness and
worship,
for everyone born, the right to be free.

Shirley Erena Murray (b 1931)
Music: Lori True (b1961)

Prayers of Intercession.

Gracious God, you have loved us since the beginning of time, hear us now as we offer you our prayers of concern and intercession.

We pray for the work of the church throughout the world particularly for those who work as Mission Partners or for All we Can and other relief agencies bringing support and care to diverse communities.

Lord Hear us: Lord Graciously hear us.

We pray for all those whose lives have been made vulnerable by climate change. Those whose homes are threatened by flooding or whose crops fail because of drought. We pray for those who have been forced from their homes either by the climate or forced to flee because of war, persecution and fear for their lives. Help us to consider what we can do as individuals and as communities to make a difference.

Lord hear us: Lord Graciously hear us.

We pray for future generations, that they may learn from our irresponsibility, and learn to be good stewards, living simply and in tune with creation. We pray for the leaders of all nations, for wisdom to acknowledge the issues facing the future of our environment and its' effect on the poorest communities and that through peaceful debate and policy they will bring an end to exploitation and injustice.

Lord hear us: Lord Graciously hear us.

Lord, we pray for ourselves, that our hearts and minds may be stirred, that we might live as responsible stewards of your creation, striving to live in tune with the planet and respecting all who live on it. working to bring equality, justice and peace. Help us to play our part, individually and as churches, to spread your love and values wherever and whenever we see a need.

Lord hear us: Lord Graciously hear us.

Gracious Lord we offer these prayers and the unspoken prayers in our hearts in the name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen,

[Hymn: God in his love for us StF 727: HP 343](#)

1.
God in his love for us lent us this planet,
gave it a purpose in time and in space:
small as a spark from the fire of creation,
cradle of life and a home for our race.

2.
Thanks be to God for its bounty and beauty,
life that sustains us in body and mind:
plenty for all, if we learn how to share it,
riches undreamed of to fathom and find.

3.
Long have our human ways ruined its
harvest,

long has earth bowed to the terror of force:
long have we wasted what others have
needed,
poisoned the fountain of life at its source.

4.
Earth is the Lord's: it is ours to enjoy it,
ours, as God's stewards, to farm and defend.
From its pollution, misuse and destruction,
good Lord, deliver us, world without end.

Fred Pratt Green (1903-2000)
Music: Valerie Anne Ruddle (b. 1932)

Blessing.

May God the Creator who made heaven and earth bless us with creativity and wonder.

May Jesus who walked through the fields and cities bless us with kind hands and listening ears.

May the Holy Spirit who is around us and within us bless us with the courage to be caring and just.

May we work and walk in the strong love of the Trinity all our days and nights

Amen