

**Written Service Sunday June 26th**  
**A service of worship for use at home**  
**Prepared by Catherine Smith**

Charity number  
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As a circuit over the past few weeks we have been exploring some of the discipleship pathways. This week we will be talking a journey down the flourish pathway – we care for creation and all God’s gifts

**Call to worship**

Let us worship God,  
The God who forms the rhythm of our lives  
The God who is present  
At the beginning and ending  
Of each day... each season... each purpose  
Amen



*Kate McIlloga Harvest for the world page 245*

**Hymn** – StF 17 With Gladness we worship.

1 With gladness we worship, rejoice as  
we sing,  
Free hearts and free voices how blessed  
to bring,  
The old, thankful story shall scale Thine  
abode,  
Thou King of all glory, most bountiful God.

2 Thy right would we give Thee—true  
homage Thy due,  
And honour eternal, the universe through,  
With all Thy creation, earth, heaven and  
sea,  
In one acclamation we celebrate Thee.

3 Renewed by Thy Spirit, redeemed by  
Thy Son,  
Thy children revere Thee for all Thou hast  
done.  
O Father! returning to love and to light,  
Thy children are yearning to praise Thee  
aright.

4 We join with the angels; and so there is  
given  
From earth Hallelujah, in answer to  
heaven.  
Amen! Be Thou glorious below and  
above,  
Redeeming, victorious, and infinite Love!

So if we are thinking about caring for creation, we should perhaps start by reminding ourselves of how God created the universe.

**Reading** Genesis 1 v 1 -28 How the universe was created

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

And God said...

“Let there be light,”

“Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water.”

“Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear.”

“Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land...”

“Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night ...”

“Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the vault of the sky.”

“Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds...”

“Let us make mankind in our image,

**God saw that it was good.**

### **Prayers of adoration and thanks**

For our prayers of adoration and thanksgiving, I invite you to sing “For the beauty of the earth, or maybe read the words.

### **Hymn** StF 102 – For the beauty of the earth

1 For the beauty of the earth,  
for the glory of the skies,  
for the love which from our birth  
over and around us lies.

*Christ, our Lord, 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,  
*Christ, our Lord,...*

3 For the joy of ear and eye,  
for the mind and heart’s delight,  
for the mystic harmony  
linking sense to sound and light.  
*Christ, our Lord,...*

4 For the joy of human love,  
brother, sister, parent, child,  
friends on earth, and friends above,  
pleasures pure and undefiled  
*Christ, our Lord,...*

5 For each perfect gift and sign  
of your love so freely given,  
graces human and divine,  
flowers of earth and buds of heaven.  
*Christ, our Lord,...*

### **Reflection**

So we left our reading with God creating human beings. If we read on a little, we are told that God created mankind ...

**“so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” (NIV)**

This is quite a profound statement, isn’t it? That we are to rule over God’s creation. And in many ways it seems that this is indeed what we have done. We have used creation to make power, to make scientific advances, (some good, some not so good), to grow as much food as we can, to travel to faraway places, to manufacture new products, (again some good, some not so good) to explore space, to grow things out of season, to make the world work as hard as it can. In that sense we have ruled the creation. But at what cost?

As I write this the temperatures are in the high 20 degrees, weather warnings for heat have been in place for a few days. Think back to last summer. In the midst of that heatwave, some Derbyshire reservoirs were just 14% full, hosepipe bans imposed, gardens looking very sad, farmers’ fields looking desolate and wildfires and grassfires. In 2006 we were

fortunate enough to visit Canada and were able to see the magnificent Athabasca Glacier in the Rockies. The glacier currently loses depth at a rate of about 5 metres (16 ft) per year and has receded more than 1.5 km (0.93 mi) and lost over half of its volume in the past 125 years. We can also think back to the warnings which David Attenborough gives us repeatedly about the damage we impose on creation, particularly regarding single use plastics.

The world, God's creation, all those wonderful things we gave thanks for in our earlier prayers - isn't very well at the moment.

So where does that leave us?

Let's go back to that reading from the end of the creation account in Genesis.

**27 So God created mankind in his own image,  
in the image of God he created them;  
male and female he created them.**

We are created in the image of God. A God who created a beautiful world – a God who brings restoration and healing to a creation which has been and still is groaning. What does that mean for us if we are indeed made in God's image?

Well firstly remember God looked at his creation and saw that it was good. We need to not take it for granted and appreciate and give thanks. Just like we did earlier.

Secondly if we are made in God's image, a God who brings about restoration and healing, then surely we have a role to play.

I actually like how the Message puts those verses from Genesis.

**God created human beings;  
he created them godlike,  
Reflecting God's nature.**

**He created them male and female.**

**God blessed them:**

**“Prosper! Reproduce! Fill Earth! Take charge!**

**Be responsible for fish in the sea and birds in the air, for every living thing that moves on the face of Earth.”**

Here we are charged to reflect God's nature, to be responsible for the fish in the sea, the birds in the air, the cattle, the Earth itself, and every animal that moves on the face of Earth.”

God told those first humans and therefore us to Prosper! Reproduce! Fill Earth! Take charge!

Be responsible for fish in the sea and birds in the air, for every living thing that moves on the face of Earth.”

Made in God's image we are responsible for all of creation.

But Cath – I hear you say. Where do we start?

Well here are my thoughts.

**Educate ourselves** – In many ways it has never been easier to educate ourselves. We can have access to the news 24 hours a day if we were so inclined. We can access news and articles through newspapers, podcasts, books and surfing the internet. There are many organisations and charities now involved in all sorts of aspects of caring for our planet. There are many documentaries on numerous TV channels. We have already mentioned the David Attenborough programmes. One of the best programmes Nigel and I have found to educate and inform is Countryfile on BBC 1 on a Sunday. A programme which looks at all aspects of the countryside – farming and fishing, woodlands and meadows, the negative and the positive. Each item is relatively short and in language which is easy to understand. I have learnt so much.

The next thing I think we can do is **look at the bigger picture**. There is no doubt that at the moment in the UK we are facing a bit of a problem due to current changes in climate. But as I said earlier it seems to be that only when there is a crisis do we stop to think or realise how fortunate we are. And also it seems that when we are in a crisis, understandably we become quite inward looking. Our news is dominated by what this means for the UK, the problems this is causing us.

**BUT** – when do we ever hear that according to WaterAid ...

World Wide:

771 million people don't have clean water close to home.

1.7 billion people don't have a decent toilet of their own.

Every minute a new-born dies from infection caused by lack of clean water and an unclean environment.

Diarrhoea caused by dirty water and poor toilets kills a child under 5 every 2 minutes. Around the world up to 443 million school days are lost every year because of water-related illnesses.

If everyone, everywhere had clean water, the number of diarrhoeal deaths would be cut by a third.

I just think in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century those figures are staggering and not in a good way.

Again as we hear about the effect of Climate change to us, it is so easy to forget that it does not only affect us . According to the United Nations Climate change is likely to lead to an increase in water levels and serious flooding, and at the same time cause water scarcity in arid regions. Overall, climate change is projected to deliver a devastating combination of adverse impacts for the world's poor, both because of geography and low income, making adaptation to climate change much more difficult. While developing countries have contributed the least to the problem, they are expected to bear the brunt of the impact of climate change, which threatens to jeopardize many of the developmental gains that have already been achieved

Many of us take pride in our gardens and put a lot of time and effort and in some cases money into them, and currently they are suffering. But we are not dependent on our gardens for our crops or for our livelihood.

I have read a few articles which highlight some of the problems faced by farmers. The obvious one of course is to agricultural crops, the crops grown for human consumption. But many farmers grow crops to feed their animals – with a lack of grass in the fields many are already having to use stock they were planning on saving for the winter.

Which brings us onto our next point. **Identify something which you can do.**

When we are faced by a big problem and particularly when the news is bombarding you with negative facts it is really easy to be overwhelmed and you just don't know where to start, and the danger then is to do nothing. One thing which I am finding is helping me is to think of things which I can do – however small.

So I am making a big effort not to have the tap running when I am cleaning my teeth. I am having a quick shower and finding another space for my thinking time!!!

I have put two watering cans by the back door so that I can recycle whatever water I can such as water which has been used for washing vegetables or just rinsing things out or the water left in the bottom of my water bottle etc.

In the bigger picture of climate change I try and switch lights off, which of course will cut down on energy bills too, I think about reusing plastic bags which food comes in rather than buying freezer bags. It just takes a bit of effort to wash them out – and then recycle the water into the watering cans by the back door!!!!

These are things we can do as individuals, but what about things we could do as a church?

Many of the same apply – don't leave taps running. Look after our buildings. Maybe think about whether we can avoid using single use plastic. Maybe we could support an environmental charity or a charity working in a specific area, such as WaterAid.

Last year at the Lambeth conference, the meeting of Anglican Bishops from across the globe which meets every 10 years, a worldwide environmental initiative - a communion forest was launched – set to include tree planting, the creation of wetlands, and coastal restoration projects. The first tree of the Communion Forest was planted in the Lambeth Palace garden

**Archbishop Justin Welby said: “Scripture is full of rich descriptions of our natural world and God’s love for His creation.**

**“It’s the call of the Church to treasure this gift, to stand alongside our brothers and sisters around the Anglican Communion who are already affected by climate change, and to safeguard the environment upon which all of us depend.**

**“I pray the tree planted today in Lambeth Palace will be the beginning of one of the world’s most widespread and diverse environmental projects.**

Although this is an Anglican Initiative maybe we can jump on board and look to plant a tree or an area of meadowland in our church grounds or look to sponsor a tree in another area somewhere.

The final thing we can do of course is **pray**. Normally of course we would put prayer first, but I thought I would put it at the end to lead us into a prayer of confession and our prayers for our world.

Reflecting on his attendance and meeting with the Anglican Bishops at Lambeth Palace, last year’s president of conference said this

I am reminded of the old story about an American evangelist who would pray daily for revival, but nothing happened. One day the penny dropped. That day he drew a circle on the ground, stood within it and prayed again. This time he asked the Lord to send revival by starting within the circle and working outwards. If we are to respond effectively to the climate crisis, we need to begin with ourselves. We need to make the personal sacrifices that change requires and only then can lead others to do the same.

Amen

### **A prayer of Confession**

Creator God,  
forgive us for the mess we have made of your planet,  
for our role in destroying habitats on land and in water,  
for failing to look at the bigger picture when we look to develop new products or technologies,  
for thinking only of what the world means to human kind and not to the most majestic or the minutest creatures of God's creation,  
for polluting the world as we discard what we have finished with,  
for not responding quickly enough,  
for just not thinking.  
Help us to make amends  
and to treat your beautiful world with respect and care. **Amen.**

### **Prayers for our world**

For our prayers for our world I am going to invite you to do 3 things

1. Think about the ways in which you don't look after God's world and say sorry.
2. Pledge to watch a TV programme, read a book or a newspaper article to educate yourself.
3. Think of one action you can do however simple

### **Hymn** StF 487 – You shall go out with joy

Our final hymn looks forward to a time when the trees will once again clap their hands.

You shall go out with joy  
And be led forth with peace,  
And the mountains and the hills  
shall break forth before you.  
There'll be shouts of joy  
And the trees of the fields  
shall clap, shall clap their hands.

### **Chorus**

And the trees of the fields shall clap their hands,  
And the trees of the fields shall clap their hands,  
And the trees of the fields shall clap their hands,  
And you'll go out with joy.

### **Blessing and Affirmation of Faith**

We believe that creation is a gift of God,  
an expression of our creator's goodness.

We believe that as human beings we are part of this creation

And that we share in a special way in the creative power of God.

We believe that the resources of our land and waters and air are  
precious gifts from our creator,  
to be used and looked after with loving care.

So as we leave this place may we seek ways to play our part so that all your creation may flourish. Amen

