

PRINTED SERVICE FOR 19TH SEPTEMBER 2021

CLIMATE JUSTICE

Note: - this is based on the materials used for the Circuit Climate Sunday Service on 5th September.

Call to worship

A creation prayer taken from Praying-Nature.com

God our Father, you created the world and sent your own Son to live among us, made of the same stuff, breathing the same air, marvelling at sunrise and sunset just as we do.

Help us to participate in the life around and within us as your life, as you living in us and we living in you and in each other.

God of love and life, restore us to your peace, renew us through your power and teach us to love all that you have created and to care for the earth as your gift and our home.

Hymn 727 – God in His love for us lent us this planet

[Watch on You tube](#)

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 the home of our race.

Long have our human wars 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.

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.

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

Fred Pratt Green © 1973 Stainer & Bell Ltd

Reading

Job chapter 38, verses 4 to 22

Reflection

The environmental crisis confronting the whole of creation is a gordian knot of complexities. The tale is full of struggles for political power, deeply embedded human behaviours and evolving scientific insight. Our faith demands we protect and preserve creation's beauty and richness. Where can we find biblical discernment?

The book of Job illustrates God's relationship with the environment in a sublime choreography of creation's forces. *In all your life, have you ever called up the dawn? Have you visited storehouse of snow? Which way is the home of light, Where does darkness dwell? Can you bring out the signs of the zodiac in their season?*

A sample of God in total command of creation's tapestry, spanning Job chapters 38-41. God responds to the arguments about Job's suffering. The wealthy, powerful and righteous man succumbs to calamity after calamity. His friends, convinced this is punishment for Job's wrongdoing, seek to persuade Job to admit his failings and seek forgiveness. Then God's punishment will end. Job denies misfortune is God's penalty for human failing, or that God is vengeful. Job attributed his early success to God's support, but now suffers because God abandoned him. Job counters his friends' discourse in anger and frustration with God, demanding God justify himself.

A younger friend declares angrily that their age has not brought wisdom, accusing them of closed-mindedly denying God's true nature. Finally, God responds, exposing their gulf in understanding, whilst proving himself as sole master of creation's intricacy.

The polarised perspectives of the supposedly wiser, older generation is exposed as they constrain God to their limited image of him. They need the youngster's challenge to awaken from complacency and re-evaluate their understanding. Finally, Job admits, *"I spoke of things I have not understood. I knew of you only by report, but now I see you with my own eyes"*.

God resolved the lengthy discourse, tearing their arguments apart by wonderful illustrations of His power in action. Job is finally brought to peace with God.

Reading

John chapter 21, verses 15 to 19.

Reflection

Just as Job was in anguish because of his suffering and loss of everything dear to him, so we find Peter in anguish because of his moment of being overtaken by fear of discovery, as he sat in the garden of the High priest at Jesus' trial.

Imagine what is going round in Peter's mind – remembering that moment recorded in John chapter 6, when many of Jesus' followers struggling with his claims to be one with God – (I am the Bread of life, I am the True Vine) were even more challenged when Jesus expected them to eat his flesh and drink his blood in order to be part of his kingdom. On that occasion, when Jesus asked the twelve if they would leave also, it was Peter who declared "We KNOW, and believe that you are the Holy one of God", only a short while later to be denying any knowledge of him. Peter is torn up as those two moments circle round each other in his mind.

Could he ever be comfortable in Jesus' presence? Despite his shame, he still left his friends struggling with the heaving nets. Confronting Peter's foreboding and overwhelming sense of guilt, Jesus took him aside. "*Do you love me more than these?*" "*Feed my lambs, tend and feed my sheep.*" No matter how big his mistake, Jesus forgave everything, giving Peter a new responsibility – be the good shepherd – nurture and feed my creation: both infant and mature. Jesus warns Peter of its costly nature. He should neither worry nor consider what part others will play. This commission is for him, filled with the Spirit and motivated by his love for God.

Now it is we who are in anguish about the climate emergency – human activity slowly but surely destroying the beauty and richness of creation.

Confronted by climate emergency, we could dwell on the world's guilt, as Peter bore the enormity of denial. Overwhelmed by the enormity of the crisis, we could follow Job's comforters, arguing fault and seeking reasons. We could suppose God wreaks vengeance out of retribution. We might freeze in inaction through denial. Just as the risen Jesus told Peter to put everything behind him. He commands us, if we truly love God, to be today's good shepherd. Caring for His creation. Protecting it, nurturing it, tending it, allowing it to grow and flourish.

Facing climate crisis, let us learn from Job's experience, and his friends showing him how much he needed to learn. How it was the youngest of his friends who put them all to shame. How God inspired hope as he revealed his love and power over creation. Remember that Jesus forced Peter to overcome his anguish and fear as he commissioned him to act out his gospel.

Jesus demands. No recriminations, no denial, no counting future cost. Simply accept our calling, empowered by His Spirit, to tend creation and secure a future bound by God's love.

Hymn (sung to tune *Bethany Singing the Faith 110 – In the wonder of Creation*)

When you spoke and shaped creation
you designed it to be good:
galaxies and ecosystems
functioned as you said they should.
By your living Word of power
you sustain the cosmos, still:
God of splendour, how we marvel
at your vast creative skill.

But the people you appointed
to the care of what you made
disregarded your instruction,
spurned the truth, and disobeyed;
and we all, by our behaviour,
frequently endorse that choice-
God of grace, we need your pardon
for our deafness to your voice.

When the future seems so threatened
by the evils of our race;
when pollution, war and famine
are the issues we must face;
when in our lives your reflection
is distorted, blurred or cracked,
God of wholeness, may your wisdom
be a light our hearts refract.

Teach us, then, to treat creation
with attention and respect,
not to scorn its rich resources
by abuse or cool neglect:
you who formed this planet's beauty
lent its wealth for all to share:
God of hope, let us be signals
of your rule and of your care.

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Hymn 110 In the wonder of creation (alternative if hymns are not printed)

[Watch on youtube](#)

Prayers

In this third week of our circuit campaign for climate justice, we focus our prayers for creation on the threat to whole ecosystems.

We pray of our concern for the danger to whole ecosystems because of human activity:

- for the animals and plants finding their habitat shrunk by human activity – felling forests to make more profit from the land, or to turn more land over to food production;
- for the changing climate which threatens whole species through drought or flood;
- for the changing environmental conditions allowing species to encroach on and take-over the habitat of more vulnerable species;
- for the spreading of new pests and diseases, encouraged by changes in temperature and humidity;
- for the threat to sealife as temperature patterns in the oceans migrate, corals become bleached and habitats are destroyed.

With all our friends and neighbours in the Ipswich Methodist Circuit, we join this week in our prayer for ecosystems:

We pray for an understanding of the threat to species diversity, give thanks for all those striving to protect vulnerable environments, and elimination of practice that damages and exploits resources

Help us like Peter, to proclaim loudly and with confidence “that we too know and believe that Jesus is the Holy one of God”, and like Job, “we see you with our own eyes”.

If you feel able, we invite you to join in the pledge in support of climate justice:

We believe in climate justice:

**We commit ourselves to listen and learn from stories around the world,
to speak out and act for climate justice and
to be ambassadors of hope for creation’s richness.**

Responding to God’s call

In our circuit-wide climate action campaign, we have chosen to work together supporting each other in a concerted campaign in which we balance the need to inform ourselves through active **learning**, sharing our understanding with others by **speaking out**, ensuring we make a difference through our **actions**, and by drawing on the love of God for the wonder of his creation to **inspire hope**.

Each week leading up to the COP26 global conference on the climate, we have a campaign helping you to learn more, teaching you how and why to speak out, enabling you to act with

confidence and above all, holding all together in the love of God to inspire hope in God's creation and its rich future.

Remember – **learn, speak, act, inspire hope**. Ask yourself each day: “what new thing have I learnt, how have I spoken out, have my actions made a difference, and when have I inspired fresh hope?”

Hymn 662 Have you heard God's voice

[Watch on you tube](#)

Have you heard God's voice;
has your heart been stirred?
are you still prepared to follow?
Have you made a choice
to remain and serve,
though the way be rough and narrow?

*Will you walk the path
that will cost you much
and embrace the pain and sorrow?
Will you trust in One
who entrusts to you
the disciples of tomorrow.*

Will you use your voice;
will you not sit down
when the multitudes are silent?
Will you make a choice
to stand your ground
when the crowds are turning violent?

In your city streets
will you be God's heart?
Will you listen to the voiceless?
Will you stop and eat,
and when friendships start,
will you share your faith with the faithless?

Will you watch the news
with the eyes of faith
and believe it could be different?
Will you share your views
using words of grace?
Will you leave a thoughtful imprint?

*We will walk the path
that will cost us much
and embrace the pain and sorrow.
We will trust in One
who entrusts to us
the disciples of tomorrow.*

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For further reflection

Today's reading from Job 38 was the beginning of God's response to Job, in which he explains his love for and mastery of all of creation. You might like to read all the way from chapter 38 through to chapter 41 to see the full extent of that oversight. Reflect too on how the writer of Job (and indeed the creation stories in Genesis) shared a surprisingly deep insight into the nature of creation. Consider how much of creation we now take for granted compared with those whose lives were much more strongly influenced by their closeness to creation, and how we might all reconnect more closely with creation so that we see ourselves as an integral part of how it flourishes. What might this mean for our expectations about our own lifestyle and footprint on the world?

If you have access to the internet, explore the growing resources on climate justice, at <http://methodistic.org.uk/climate-action>

There is a prayer card supporting our climate justice campaign in the lead up to COP26 in November. If you haven't yet received your card, please ask for one from one of your church leaders.

David Welbourn