



## Call to worship

Have you heard the good news? There is hope: an everlasting hope.

Have you heard the good news? A hope for justice and a hope for peace.

Have you heard the good news? We have a future filled with hope, because of what the Lord has done.

## Hymn *The Climate is Changing*

*written for the COP26 conference in Glasgow, ©2021 by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette  
sung to tune St Denio (Immortal, invisible, God only wise)*

The climate is changing! Creation cries out!  
Your people face flooding and fire and drought.  
We see the great heat waves and storms at their worst.  
We pray for the poor, Lord— for they suffer first.

We pray for the animals here in our midst  
who cannot defend their own right to exist.  
We pray for the mountains and forests and seas  
that bear the harsh footprint of our human greed.

We thank you for people who treasure the earth,  
whose faith has long taught them its beauty and worth.

We thank you as well for the children and youth  
who look to the future and speak out the truth.

We thank you for leaders, courageous and brave,  
who know that the earth is worth fighting to save,  
who care about justice and what they should do,  
who listen to science and work hard for you.

You love this good earth, and you sent us your Son!  
May we love our neighbours— there's work to be done.  
May we, by your Spirit, do all in our power  
to care for your earth in this critical hour.

## Prayer

Lord God, We are inspired by the promises of your creation. For your dream as you unleashed your Spirit to brood over nothingness and set in motion the unfurling of reality. For the joy you felt as you saw your vision taking shape with its majesty and beauty, pausing each day to allow your dream to roam ever wider. For the moment you paused, surveyed the splendour of your achievement and saw how good it was. For that moment of courage when you released creation into its unknown, uncertain future of limitless possibilities. Left in the care of a flawed and imperfect race. For the smiles you have beamed, the tears you have wept, the frowns and grimaces you've borne, the fears you have tamed, the proud glow you have felt as you have guided, inspired, nudged, but never controlled. Above all, for the abundance of your love we praise you Lord God.

For the times we have been the cause of your tears, your fears, the grimaces and the frowns, we are truly sorry. For the way human endeavour has damaged your creation, turned some of its beauty into ugliness, and squashed some of its endless promise, we ask your forgiveness. For the way we have used its resources to our own ends, and the way we have abused our privileged position to the detriment of others, we ask your forgiveness.

As you forgive our sins again, and redeem our lives, we pray that you will guide us in our commitment to nurture and restore creation to its true glory. In this, we offer our Hope into your hands and entrust it to your Spirit. Amen.

**Scripture** Colossians 1: 1-23

## Reflection

Tomorrow brings the opening of the COP26 global summit in Glasgow. COP - the Community of Partners somehow has a spiritual ring about it – irrespective of its true origin. In reality it is the most influential body setup to bring together the senior decision makers from its 197 member nations so that they can make binding agreements to protect the planet from the impact of climate change. It is the melting pot in which the rich and poor come together, with all their vested interests and power plays and political fears to negotiate their way to an agreement. An agreement that will affect every one of us, and the type of future we will see unfurling before us.

It is the most important gathering the world has seen, and it needs our prayers and our support.

For the last 8-weeks, I have been trying to prepare people and churches in the Ipswich Circuit to provide the kind of influential leadership our local communities need, to play our part in assuring the success of COP 26. All this preparation has been built around the premise that we need to **learn** about the climate crisis – too much trouble is being caused by spreading of concerns and fears that are not grounded and supported by facts, so it is important that our campaign and fight for climate justice is truly grounded in understanding drawn from the diversity of life – we need to **LEARN**. Once we have learnt the true facts about the threats posed to creation by the history of human endeavour that has fuelled climate change, we need to **SPEAK OUT** – sharing our understanding with other, challenging the myths and the deniers, and making sure political and business leaders hear our demands to take the difficult decisions and provide meaningful leadership to stop further damage from climate change. Our learning will also guide us to the changes we need to make in our lives to **ACT** in ways that are sensitive to the needs of the environment. Everything we do and say must **INSPIRE HOPE** – our learning will teach us that there are known solutions to the majority of the causes of climate change, so there is no cause for despair or excuse to throw the towel in, unless we succumb to the fear that freezes and drives inaction. Armed with the gospel founded in love and hopefulness, we cannot allow the doom-mongers to call the shots.

There is hope and we must be its ambassadors. I'm not talking about the hope that you have when you buy your lottery ticket, that you will be the lucky one who wins the millions. That isn't hope, that is wishful dreaming. That is gambling on the chance that you might. I'm talking about hope that is a conviction, hope that is grounded in belief and promise.

For nearly 7 of those 8 weeks, that I've been developing the story and seeking to share the realities of climate change, I've placed **LEARNING** as the foundation, from which we **SPEAK, ACT** and **HOPE**. Then a new dawning struck. The Spirit awoke, showing me that however valuable and important these efforts were, there was a better way! Where have I seen that phrase before?

It isn't knowledge and learning that is the power from which all else follows. That is the way the world looks on things. The world with all its flaws. No. We should start with hope. Hope is the power on which the world will be transformed. Hope is the power on which the dangers of the climate crisis will be averted and the environment will be rescued. Hope isn't the end of the journey, it's where we must start.

When we go right back to the biblical creation story, we are inspired by the image of God's spirit brooding over nothingness. We are lit up by the thought of when the WORD was with God and the Word was God, that moment when he alone began the process of assembling the building blocks of life. Creation wasn't forged by knowledge and learning. Creation was forged by promise and possibility and hopefulness. As every block was put into place, there were new possibilities, new promises, new adventures, and more hopefulness was sprinkled into the mix. And God saw that all this hopefulness was good, as each stage was completed. Then in the sixth day of creativity, God made humanity in his own image. Men and Women he made them.

What God unleashed on the world was hopefulness. His hopefulness. Hopefulness, empowered by love. The certainty, the trust, the conviction that all would be well and continue to be well, and rich and fulfilling. At any point in time, completely free and unknown, given the discoveries still to be made. God made man and woman in his image. That means we are hopeful, not out of chance, not out of wishful thinking, but because hopefulness is in our very being, and it is the hopefulness of God that flows richly in our veins. We aren't limited by the hope we have *in* God, but we are empowered by God's hopefulness that he has made *in us*, as he made us in his own likeness.

So, our unfolding climate action story is one in which we should begin by being touched and inspired by hope – casting off the negativity and the gloom, and being full of conviction that there are solutions there waiting to be found. We are full of certainty that there are solutions to every crisis, if only we bring the strength of our hope and conviction to the party. In hopefulness, we take action. In hopefulness, we have dialogue with others, speaking about the promise of hope, challenging the voice of futility, and despair. Out of hopefulness, we direct our politicians, policy-makers and decision makers to stop their dithering and implement the policies that bring positive action and redirect the future on a journey that is full of hope, and our learning and understanding becomes concrete, as we see the decisions and actions bringing fulfilment of our hope.

Let's begin this week of COP26, full of the conviction that in hopefulness, we will inspire others to believe in the actions and decisions they need to take. It is their hopefulness and the inspiration they receive in the messages and support from ourselves and others which will overcome their fears, not the cold harsh facts. Let's make sure we give them the inspiration and hope they need.

Let's turn our campaign of learn, speak, act, hope into a campaign of hope, act, speak and learn. Amen.

**Hymn**            ***Lord of all Hopefulness (Singing the Faith 526)***    Jan Struther (1901-1953)

Lord of all hopefulness, Lord of all joy,  
whose trust, ever child-like, no cares could destroy,  
be there at our waking, and give us, we pray,  
your bliss in our hearts, Lord, at the break of the day.

Lord of all kindness, Lord of all grace,  
your hands swift to welcome, your arms to embrace,  
be there at our homing, and give us, we pray,  
your love in our hearts, Lord, at the eve of the day.

Lord of all eagerness, Lord of all faith,  
whose strong hands were skilled at the plane and the lathe,  
be there at our labours, and give us, we pray,  
your strength in our hearts, Lord, at the noon of the day.

Lord of all gentleness, Lord of all calm,  
whose voice is contentment, whose presence is balm,  
be there at our sleeping, and give us, we pray,  
your peace in our hearts, Lord, at the end of the day.

### **Prayer**

We pray for a successful COP26 summit, that the climate crisis may be understood; there will be the political will and global unity to commit to urgent action, that will protect even the most vulnerable

We pray for all the World Leaders confronting the needs of climate justice and the actions and decisions they know they need to take, whilst seeking to lead their nation with its own needs and concerns. For the rich nations who will need to let go of their wealth and lead their people to let go of their privileged lifestyles. For the poor nations who fear that they will be prevented from continuing their journey of advancement, keeping their people in poverty, hunger and disadvantage.

We pray for the business leaders who know that they must make costly changes to adapt to a safer world, knowing their powerful shareholders continue to expect more.

We pray for the poor and destitute, that they may see their dreams of finding self-worth and justice and acceptance being fulfilled as part of a new world order full of care and hope and compassion.

We pray for the comfortable, that they may hear the call of justice for all and find their future in the comfortable glow of compassion and fairness, rather than in soulless possession.

We pray for ourselves, that we may have the strength and purpose to fill our waking with the overflowing HOPE that was embedded in our souls, when we were made in God's image. Amen.

**Hymn**            ***Best of all is God is with us (Singing the Faith 610)***    Andrew Pratt (b. 1948), © 2008, Stainer & Bell

Best of all is God is with us,  
God will hold and never fail.  
Keep that truth when storms are raging,  
God remains though faith is frail.

Best of all is God is with us,  
life goes on and needs are met,  
God is strongest in our weakness.  
Love renews, will not forget.

Best of all is God is with us,  
hearts are challenged, strangely warmed,

faith is deepened, courage strengthened,  
grace received and hope reformed.

Best of all is God is with us,  
in our joy and through our pain,  
till that final acclamation:  
'life is Christ, and death is gain'.

Best of all is God is with us  
as we scale eternal heights,  
love grows stronger, undiminished;  
earth grows dim by heaven's lights.