

Music: Let all creation sing - © Paul Zach, Andy Zipf / Resound Worship, Administered by Jubilate Hymns Ltd

Welcome to worship on this Environment Sunday. This is different to the Churches Together Climate Sunday which we will observe on 29 August. Yesterday was the UN WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY which is celebrated every year on June 5<sup>th</sup> to remind humans that they are not alone on this planet. There is a huge biological ecosystem that exists and humans survive because of that. The day is observed by United Nations to encourage worldwide awareness and work towards improving the environment. Every year responsibility is given to a country to host the event and provide a platform to discuss SUSTAINABLE Development Goals. The day is celebrated by millions of people and organisations across the globe to share their experiences, challenges and solutions.

This year Pakistan is hosting it and the theme is Ecosystem Restoration, with a special focus on creating a good relationship with nature. So today we will focus on God's creation and our responsibility to care for it.

Let us pray together in thankfulness, lament and hope for all of creation, our global neighbours and our world leaders in the midst of the climate emergency. 2021 is a crucial year for action on the climate crisis, with politicians gathering to pledge action to bring down carbon emissions and help slow climate change. The G7 meeting in June in Cornwall will focus on uniting some of the wealthiest and most polluting democracies in the world to help build back better from coronavirus and create a greener, more prosperous future. Then, in November, COP26 conference will bring together Governments of practically every country in the world in Glasgow to tackle the climate crisis.

**Call to Worship** (inspired by Psalm 24:1)

"The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world and those who live in it; for God has founded it on the seas and established it on the rivers."

O come let us worship and lift our hearts . . .

Not because the world is good and last week was awesome,  
but because the earth is the Lord's and everything in it,  
the God of the whole Earth.

O come let us worship and raise our hands . . .

Not because our lives are all sweetness and light,  
But because even those who walk in darkness  
can see a great light, the light of Christ in the world.

O come let us worship and bow down . . .

Not because God gives us what we want,  
But because God gives us what we need.  
Our duty is to share, so all in the world have enough.

**HYMN** For the beauty of the earth (R&S 41 omit v 4 and 6)

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 thee we raise  
this our sacrifice of praise*

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

For the joy of ear and eye,  
for the heart and mind's delight  
for the mystic harmony  
linking sense to sound and sight.

For each perfect gift of thine  
to our race so freely given  
graces human and divine  
flowers of earth and buds of heaven

### Opening Prayer of Thanksgiving

Creator God, we acknowledge that as your handiwork, we stand alongside all that you have made. Trees and rivers, mountains and valleys, soaring birds and scuttling creatures, all are held within your care.

May we grow in our love and appreciation for the fabulous variety around us; and may our awe and wonder draw us closer to the natural world, and through it to you, the God of all things. Amen

by Rev Cate Williams, Diocese of Gloucester, from the Church of England's World Environment Day prayers

### Prayer of confession (Tearfund)

Our world and our neighbours are impacted unequally by climate change. Those who are least responsible are impacted first and worst. Orbisa lives with her husband and nine children in north-east Ethiopia – one of the hottest inhabited places in the world. Over the last few years, rainfall in her region has reduced dramatically because of climate change. Orbisa says, 'In the past we had rainfall every six months, but now we don't know when the rainfall will come. The length of the dry season is increasing.' Without rain, her animals are dying, which means less income, less food and poor health for the family. Orbisa now has to travel many hours every day to fetch water, but still her children go thirsty. This is what the climate emergency looks like. If we don't take urgent action now, climate change will continue to push millions more people like Orbisa deeper into poverty, and so we pray:

Lord God, you made the world and declared it was 'very good'.  
And yet, we have not treated the earth and our fellow humans  
with the care and respect they deserve.  
We are sorry and ask for your forgiveness.  
Give us the courage to keep raising our voices about the climate emergency,  
which affects people living in poverty the worst.  
And may your Spirit of peace be in the hearts of all people,  
so that conflicts end in peace, and relationships are restored. Amen

### We listen to a song of lament for creation as a prayer:

Hear the song of our lament,  
we grieve a dry and broken land;  
hearts have turned from your intent  
and earth is ravaged by our hand.

Oceans weep for beauty lost,  
and forests plead for your return,  
fields are drenched in tears and blood;  
all nature groans beneath sin's curse.

*Have mercy, have mercy,  
have mercy on us, Lord.  
Renew us, restore us,  
have mercy on us, Lord.*

Peoples rage and nations rise  
to war and waste for senseless gain,  
turning from creation's cries  
and trading glory in for shame.  
*Have mercy...*

Lead us in your Eden call  
to live as those who bear your name;  
show us how to love your world  
until the day you come again.

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### Offering

You are reminded to send in your gifts for the work of the church.  
Holy One, receive our gifts by your grace.  
Multiply and use them through the power of the Holy Spirit  
to accomplish Christ's work of love in the world. **Amen.**

**Readings:**

We as Christians must put our faith into action for climate justice and the church must do the same. We listen now to how the church can respond to the climate crisis, being led by the words of young people who this year called on the church to bring climate change into the heart of ministry. Here are some examples of what young Christians involved in WeAreTearfund said: (to be read in worship, but not printed here).

**Revelation 9:1-6, 12-21**

I am using as the base of today's reflection, the URC Daily Devotions reflection from 31 May by Rev'd Gethin Rhys is Policy Officer for Churches together in Wales as it ties in with Environment Day. He says, "A curious feature of John's story is that people faced with the most terrible plagues still do not repent and change, but plough on regardless with their dissolute way of life. Is that realistic?"

A curious feature of the world today is that for at least 30 years it has been public knowledge that burning fossil fuels, pumping carbon into the atmosphere and destroying species and habitats is fatal for life on earth. The worst plagues of locusts ever recorded hit parts of Africa last year. The whole world, rich and poor, has experienced a lethal plague" in the form of the coronavirus pandemic, which is itself caused if not directly, then indirectly by our unnatural interactions with wild animals and the destruction of their habitats.

"Has humanity repented and changed? Well, not so as you would notice. Carbon emissions dropped only slightly in 2020 despite the lockdowns, and governments – including our own – are planning to recover from Covid by building new roads and new fossil fuelled power stations, by destroying more ancient woodlands and generally ploughing on regardless with our dissolute way of life.

These visions have never been more realistic. The willingness of humans to ignore the evidence of disaster that is staring them in the face is not some primitive fantasy – it is a description of our supposedly sophisticated modern life. As some people die, the rest seem determined to go on exploiting the earth for their own short-term gain – even at the expense of our own children."

This year we have a better window of opportunity than ever before to make an impact on government policies around climate change and the environment if we make our voices heard often and loudly during the G7 summit at the end of this week and in the run-up to the COP26 conference in November, both hosted here in the UK, by the UK government. It is not enough to lament our destruction of the planet, and pray only. Now is the time for action. As the catchphrase goes – every little helps – if we all commit to recycling as much as we can, to eating less meat, to walking or cycling instead of driving when we can. If we all sign petitions and write to our MP, those drops in the ocean that we think cannot make a difference will become a wave of public support for environmentally sustainable policies that even the most stubborn of politicians will be unable to ignore. People's minds and hearts can be changed – think of the policy to charge 5p for plastic bags, which resulted in a huge reduction in single-use plastic bags. Many people have lobbied supermarkets to use less plastic packaging, and while there is still work to be done, many have

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made good progress in this area. We can make a change and as we heard earlier from young people, we must make a change.

'We the church must love in action and not just words. We must hear the cries of a world in peril and use our platform to respond with the love of Jesus. A love that disrupts the status quo and inconveniences itself to bring restoration. This is our responsibility. This is our worship.'

"Creator God, forgive us for treating you as a comforting teddy bear or a mascot for our way of life.

As we read Revelation, may we know you as a God who warns us of our folly,

who desires not our death, but that we should turn from our wickedness and live.

While there is yet time, call us and all people to the repentance which your creation requires. Amen.

### **Hymn** God in his love (R&S 85)

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 need of,  
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 pollutions, misuse and destruction,  
good Lord, deliver us, world without end!

F. Pratt Green

### **Prayers of Intercession**

We pray for the Prime Minister as he hosts the G7 summit at the end of this week. We pray for boldness and conviction to act in truth.

We pray for leaders of the other countries attending this year: Australia, Canada, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, South Africa, South Korea and USA that they may be guided by your will to take bold actions to protect the planet.

We pray that these nations – among the wealthiest and most polluting in the world – will stop investing billions of dollars into coal, oil and gas in their recovery responses following the pandemic. We pray that governments instead fund a recovery from coronavirus that leads to a steep decline in greenhouse gas emissions – massively scaling up investment in clean energy, and in cleaner transport and public transport infrastructure.

We pray these governments will place green conditions on any help to the airline and car industries, and help companies, workers and affected communities transition towards low-carbon futures.

We pray that governments will promote a green recovery for all and stand in solidarity with low- and middle-income countries, for instance through the promotion of debt cancellation and through honouring the collective commitment to deliver \$100 billion every year for vulnerable countries to tackle climate change.

We ask for wisdom for countries most impacted by climate change to know how to adapt to a changing world, and pray that their leaders would hear the cries of the most vulnerable.

We pray for all people in leadership, locally, nationally and around the world that they may act with wisdom to bring about and maintain peace and order.

We pray for all those who are ill and those who care for them; for those awaiting test results or treatment, for the dying and those who mourn. May your infinite love and grace surround them and bring them peace, in Jesus' name.

### **Lord's Prayer**

**Hymn** Touch the earth lightly (243 Church Hymnary)

Touch the earth lightly,  
use the earth gently,  
nourish the life of the world in our care:  
gift of great wonder,  
ours to surrender,  
trust for the children tomorrow will bear.

We who endanger,  
who create hunger,  
agents of death for all creatures that live,  
we who would foster  
clouds of disaster,  
God of our planet, forestall and forgive!

Let there be greening,  
birth from the burning,  
water that blesses and air that is sweet,  
health in God's garden,  
hope in God's children,  
regeneration that peace will complete.

God of all living,  
God of all loving,  
God of the seedling, the snow, and the sun,  
teach us, deflect us,  
Christ re-connect us,  
using us gently and making us one.

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**Blessing**

Go forth into this week remembering that the earth is the Lord's and all that is in it. Touch the world lightly, nourish the planet and all that is in it, and may the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God, and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us now and evermore. Amen

Music to end: God the maker of the heavens © Sam Hargreaves / Resound Worship

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