

Worship: Sunday 6 September 2020

Good morning everyone, and welcome to worship with the churches of Fleet URC and Beacon Hill URC. My name is Ruth Dillon and I am the minister of Fleet URC and Beacon Hill URC and I shall be leading us in worship. You are all most welcome.

Our opening words are taken from Psalm 119: 33-35

*Teach me, O Lord, the way of your statutes,
and I will observe it to the end.*

*Give me understanding,
that I may keep your law
and observe it with my whole heart.*

Lead me in the path of your commandments,

for I delight in it.

Today is the first Sunday in ‘**Creation time**’, a six-week period when we reflect on God’s earth, and our care and stewardship of the planet we inhabit as part of our discipleship. Harvest is usually in this six-week period; however today we shall be using resources for Creation Time from Churches Together and our friends from the Church of Scotland.

Our theme for today is ‘**Tread gently on the earth**’.

However, let us pause and put aside the distraction of the moment,

To be still before our God

To abide in the shadow of God

To be with the God in whom we trust.

Opening music Organ Music
Nessie Black, Fleet URC

Call to worship

Leader The Creator of the Universe

All calls us to leave the darkness behind and live in the light.

Leader Our Lord Jesus Christ

All who lived and died and rose again greets us this day.

Leader The One who danced at Creation's birth

All calls us now into His presence.

So come let us worship.

Prayers of Adoration, Confession and Lords Prayer

As we say our opening prayers, there is a response within our prayers of Adoration, and they are written on the order of service.

When I say the words, ***Praise to you O God***, can you respond by saying ***We lift our praises to you.***

Creator God, you have brought your world into being;
diverse colours of blue, gold and greens,
the water that cleanses and sustains life.

Praise to you O God, we lift our praise to you.

Creator God, you have brought your world into being;
diverse colours of yellow, oranges and browns,

the earth that grows our food and nourishes our bodies.

*Praise to you O God, we lift our
praise to you.*

Creator God, you have brought your world into being;

diverse relationships, different languages, colourful cultures, the people that make our world unique and vibrant.

*Praise to You O God, we lift our
praise to you*

As many of us have returned from holidays and time away, we have delighted in your planet, its variety in nature, its laughter with family and friends, its stillness in contemplation.

*Praise to You O God, we lift our
praise to you.*

We have probably reflected on what this year 2020 has brought us: uncertainty in our living, lack of funds to sustain the global economy, lack of funds to sustain your world and the environment.

As we grieve for those who have died from Covid 19, lives lost from all over our land, old and young, fit and frail, care-worker and bus driver, nurse and doctor. We are saddened that we have to accept: our failure to plan, our failure to learn the lessons, our failure to care for our world, and our failure to treat nature and animal life with respect.

Forgive us, Lord, and help us to turn

our sorrow into action,
our failure into change,
our guilt into grace.

*And now let us be silent before God
as we open our hearts to seek God's
forgiveness.*

God in whom we live and move and
have our being,
Your tenderness and mercy
surrounding us,
and making us whole again -
restored, forgiven and free.

In your sight we are new creations,
full of potential and vessels of love.
Let us be
the action you desire,
the wisdom you crave for
And the faithfulness you deserve.

You say to each one of us, *your sins
are truly forgiven;*
yet you also say these words, *come
now and follow me.*

And now let us say the prayer that
Jesus taught his friends to say:

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done,
in earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those that
trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

Readings Now we shall hear today's readings

They are:

Genesis 9:1-17, read by Mike Fuller and William Goodall

Matthew 10:28-30, read by Hannah Earnshaw

Reflection

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of all our hearts here this morning be acceptable to you, O Lord and our strength, Amen

Today is the start of Creation time, a six-week period when Churches Together in Britain and Ireland remind themselves of what it means to care for this planet we live on, God's planet.

I am constantly amazed how God shows and points me in ways to encourage me, which I can then

share with you via a podcast, conversation or through worship; and today is no different.

I have just returned from five days away in Cornwall, with my eldest daughter Katharine, her husband Jonathan and my grandson Mathias. And for those who heard my Podcast this week entitled a 'Bubble of Peace', these words may be familiar to you. Three situations occurred where I felt God's presence near me, nudging me to reflect on these precious times.

- The first recollection was when each morning I would sit in the front porch outside the cottage. It was sheltered from the wind and rain with the morning sun streaming onto my slate seat. On the Wednesday the storms came. The rain had battered the

surrounding fields, but by 9am, although the sun was shining, the winds were very strong and making a real howling sound. As I sat there, I felt no breeze, only the sun on my face, and the words of Elijah came to my mind: '*the Lord is about to pass by*'. As I got up from my seat and peeked round the porch, I saw in the sky a rainbow, a sign of God's promise, a sign of God's love, a sign of God's everlasting grace... I felt blessed.

- The second recollection is in the same location, the small slate front porch on this 18th-century cottage. As I looked up I saw a swallow's nest, now vacant, but it had obviously been a haven for the swallows when they

brought their family this year. As I thought about where they were flying, over seas and continents to South Africa, I reflected that these small birds were protected by God, as they undertook this journey. We too are protected as we take our journey, knowing the direction we need to take, but requiring God's guidance in sunshine and moonlight..... I felt loved.

- The third recollection was after the storm, when the fruits of the damson tree had fallen to the ground, and Mathias asked if we could go out to pick the fallen fruit. As he stood collecting the damsons from the ground, I wondered how many times the old damson tree had given its fruit to the earth and its

inhabitants. As we collected the damsons, marvelling at their ripeness, I thanked God that we were part of a long line of people collecting the fruit from the earth.... I felt grateful.

The Bubbles of Peace that emerged last week - the rainbow, the journey and the fruits, all reminded me that we are part of God's world, the planet, the seasons, and part of nature, and together we enable this planet to function.

However, if one piece of the jigsaw of creation is out of place, then chaos prevails.

If it rained constantly, and the rain was polluted through neglect of our planet, the earth and the seas would suffer, the crops would fail, and there would be difficulty in ever seeing a Rainbow. Nature and

humanity would bear the brunt of such neglect. Crops and fruit would suffer, and indeed the earth would groan under the weight of abandonment and disaster.

As anyone knows who has travelled in torrential rain, it is not an easy journey. The rain bounces, the vision becomes obscured and the driving rain forces us to stop our journey for a while until we get our bearings. We become disorientated, unaware of our surroundings.

In many ways we, as humanity, have become disoriented and unaware of our surroundings, unaware of the abuse we have all contributed to over the years. Yet although the creative clock is nearly at the stroke of midnight, there is still time to halt the way we have neglected our planet.

One of the most memorable quotes I have ever heard over the years is...

Tread gently on the earth.

Tread gently on the earth, means to be careful how we place our bodies, how we use our hands, how we travel, to be aware of sustainable energy, be aware of polluting the earth with plastic, be aware of the abuse of fossil fuels, of disturbing the habitants of animals who have lived on this earth far longer than we have.

Tread gently on the earth means adhering to the call of Jesus, listening to earth's call of partnership, of justice when we see others tread loudly and abusively on the earth. It means listening to what the earth is saying, its groaning, its energy, and listening to its heartbeat.

Tread gently on the earth means listening to the Spirit that breathes through all creation, the spirit who created life, and now watching the same life be extinguished. The Spirit's wingbeats attempting to touch each individual and to awaken their senses.

At this start of Creation Time, I invite you to look within yourself, and ask *are you treading gently upon this earth?*

To look at the community and ask *how can I assist the community to tread gently upon this earth?*

To look at the world and ask *how can I assist organizations to tread gently on this earth?*

The responsibility is ours.

I pray that in years to come, another grandma can sit on the slate seat at the cottage in Cornwall, and be able to appreciate the weather, the birds

and fruits; let's hope and pray we have not left it too late.

Although this hymn is usually sung at Harvest time, it does reflect the variety of ways God provides for us and our responsibility for the upkeep and care for the earth.

Hymn RS 42 For the fruits of all creation (East Acklam)

For the fruits of all creation,
thanks be to God;
for the gifts of every nation,
thanks be to God;
for the ploughing, sowing, reaping,
silent growth while we are sleeping,
future needs in earth's safe-keeping,
thanks be to God.

In the just reward of labour,
God's will is done;
in the help we give our neighbour,

God's will is done;
in our world-wide task of caring
for the hungry and despairing,
in the harvests we are sharing,
God's will is done.

For the harvests of the Spirit,
thanks be to God;
for the good we all inherit,
thanks be to God;
for the wonders that astound us,
for the truths that still confound us,
most of all that love has found us,
thanks be to God.

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Prayers of Intercession

There is a response to our Prayers
of Intercession today.

When I say ***Creator God, hear our prayer*** could you respond by saying ***and hold our sighs and concerns of our brothers, sisters and the environment in your hands.***

Creator God
Your moulded the earth, you
fashioned it
You gave us your creativity to look
after all that dwells in
the oceans, rivers and streams
the earth, the fields and forests
the skies and the landmasses,
we offer our prayers this first Sunday
in Creation time
as we pray for your world
Creator God, hear our prayer
.....and hold our sighs and concerns of our brothers, sisters and the environment in your hands.

We pray for everything that seems
completely beyond us
And have no idea where to start
praying.
For the earth's oceans rivers and
streams, and all the life it sustains.
We pray for the many organizations
that are committed to working for
cleaner oceans, to campaigning to
make us aware of how we are
destroying our planet through waste
and abuse of resources.
Creator God, hear our prayer
.....and hold our sighs and concerns of our brothers, sisters and the environment in your hands.

We pray for the earth, its fruits and
workers,
some working for exceptionally low
pay.

We pray for farmers across the world and the commitment they have to work with nature and the animals in their care.

We pray for conservationists and organizations committed to care for your environment and the planet's species that are near extinction.

*Creator God, hear our prayer
.....**and hold our sighs and concerns of our brothers, sisters and the environment in your hands.***

We pray for all creatures who live alongside us, of whatever species, that we may always appreciate and marvel at their diversity.

As the autumn season approaches and nature prepares to sleep,

we pray that this period may be a time for us to reflect on our part within your world.

We pray for our enemies, and those we fear.

And pray for peace throughout Creation.

*Creator God, hear our prayer
.....**and hold our sighs and concerns of our brothers, sisters and the environment in your hands.***

In the silence we offer our own private prayers to you.

Creator God, our prayers we offer to you alongside our questions about what we can do to help sustain and maintain your planet.

Enter our hearts and show us how we can also care for your creation,

whether it be in a small way or
whether we commit to a larger way
through the URC Green Apostle
scheme, or through other
environmental organisations
And we pray for peace in our heart,
and the fuller joys of Christ.

Creator God, hear our prayer

**.....and hold our sighs and
concerns of our brothers, sisters
and the environment in your
hands Amen**

Closing prayer

God who creates,
Create in us a clean heart
ready for action and ready to commit

Jesus who calls,
Call us to respond to the needs of
the world
Ready to serve and ready to love

Spirit who breathes throughout all
creation,
Breathe in us an energy
that will carry us through this day
and each day of our lives;
to be called and commit to your
environment,
to the world in which we inhabit
alongside our brothers and sisters
and all of nature.

In Jesus' name we pray Amen

Blessing

May the blessing of God that is truly
beyond all human understanding,
be with us now and for ever ore
Amen

Closing music Organ Music

Nessie Black, Fleet URC