

Worship for Fleet URC & Beacon Hill URC

Sunday 25th April 2021



Creation – do we care?

Marking Earth Day 2021

Led by Karen Smith

Opening music: Think of a world without any flowers

Welcome & Gathering Prayer

Miraculous God, come to us now,
even as your Son came
to those first disciples on the shores of Galilee.
Speak your peace to our hearts.
Touch us with your Holy Spirit.
Reveal your word,
that we may hear your message this day,
and live as your disciples in the days and years to come.
In Christ's name, we pray. Amen.

— Adapted from *The Abingdon Worship Annual 2009*, © 2008 Abingdon Press. Posted on the [Worship Elements](#) page of the Ministry Matters website.

Call to worship responses led by Robert Mitchell

Morning has broken!

We gather to greet the new day by praising God.

God created us for relationship with Him, one another, and the earth.

Let us honour those relationships today and every day.

We seek to care for our brothers and sisters around the world and God's good Creation.

Let us honour those relationships today and every day.

May we commit to new ways of honouring your Creation as a means of sharing Jesus' transforming love,

And let us seek God's grace, justice and mercy for all.

Amen.

Prayers of Thanksgiving & Confession

Be content with what you have [Worship Words](#)

Creator of the Universe,

Lover of all that you make,

We thank you for this marvellous world

Which you have given us for our home.

Help us to show our gratitude

As much by our lives as by our words.

We acknowledge that so often

Our best efforts are tinged with greed,

The desire for more and different things;

And, at our worst we wholly disregard

The needs of others in this world.

Our greed is nothing less than theft
From those who have no power against us –
People, animals and nature's store.

So much was once done in ignorance;
In these days we have no excuse.
Continue, Lord, to open our eyes
To the enormity of our deeds,
And our hearts to the suffering and despoiling
Which those deeds have caused.
We ask forgiveness, Lord, from you;
From the children, women and men
Whose hurts have come from us;
And from every animal, plant and rock,
The skies above and the good earth itself,
Which nourishes and sustains us all.
By the power of your Spirit
May we change the way we live,
And follow again your path of healing,
Creator of the Universe,
And Lover of all that you make.

Joyce Dent is a member of the Andover United Reformed Church in Andover, Hampshire UK. Joyce has encouraged the Andover Church to an active Eco-Church.

Assurance of Pardon

Scripture assures us, The Lord is our Shepherd, we shall not want (Psalm 23).

“Whenever our hearts condemn us...God is greater than our hearts, and...knows everything” (1 John 3:20).

As a shepherd cares for scattered sheep, our God cares,
forgives us, and calls us into community.
Members of the one flock—we are forgiven.
Thanks be to God.

Our Father, who art in heaven, read by Robert Mitchell
hallowed be thy name.
Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who 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

Reading: Colossians 1:15-20 read by Carol Rayner

15 The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. 17 He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. 18 And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. 19 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether

things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross

Hymn: Praise to the Lord, the Almighty
Sung by Newcastle Virtual Choir

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation!
O my soul, praise Him, for He is thy health and salvation!
Come ye who hear, brothers and sisters draw near;
Praise Him in glad adoration.

Praise to the Lord, who o'er all things so wondrously reigneth,
Shelters thee under His wings, yea, so gently sustaineth!
Hast thou not seen - all that is needful hath been
Granted in what He ordaineth?

Praise to the Lord, who doth prosper thy work and defend thee;
Surely His goodness and mercy here daily attend thee;
Ponder anew - what the Almighty can do,
He who with love doth befriend thee.

Praise to the Lord! Oh, let all that is in me adore Him!
All that hath life and breath, come now with praises before
Him;
Let the Amen sound from His people again,
Gladly for aye we adore Him.

Reading: A retelling of Genesis ch.1 & 2 read by Karen Smith
& Carol Rayner

Creation

Imagine you are surrounded by nothing, no one is anywhere near you. You are all alone. And it is gloomy and dark. But in the middle of all this is God. He just is! And as God moved around, he began to create. Out of nothing he began to separate things out. He made day different from night. He made the sky different from the earth.

And God looked at what he had made and he was very pleased with everything. "This is very good," he said.

God made the sun and the moon and the stars. The sun was bright and glowing with blurred edges, high above and it slowly shifted across the sky. The moon was pale and silvery and it changed its shape as night followed night. It shone in the darkness. The stars were far away and mysterious, like tiny silver dots on a huge screen.

And God looked at what he had made and he was very pleased with everything. "This is very good," he said.

God made the dry land different from the sea. Mighty waves that crashed over rocks, seas that swooshed up the coast, little waves that gently lapped on the beach, rivers that flowed out into the deep seas. And the dry land was like the soil in this bucket.

And God looked at what he had made and he was very pleased with everything. "This is very good," he said.

God created plants and flowers and trees to grow, all different. He created red, yellow, pink, blue, orange flowers with star-patterned petals, round floppy petals, sweet-perfumed petals; some had long stems, some had thorny stems, some had short stubby stems; he created tall trees and short ones, with rough, brown trunks, or with smooth, silvery trunks, some producing nuts, some producing soft fruit, some with five fingered leaves, some with waxy copper red leaves; he created bushes and grasses and reeds; he created vegetables that grew under the ground and vegetables that grew above the ground; he created wheat and maize and barley corn.

And God looked at what he had made and he was very pleased with everything. "This is very good," he said.

God created birds and fish and animals, all sorts, all different, some big, some small, some fast, some slow, some furry, some slimy, some bright-coloured, some dull coloured, some fierce, some friendly.

And God looked at what he had made and he was very pleased with everything. "This is very good," he said.

Finally, God created human beings. They were different from the animals. They could do all sorts of things with their bodies. God asked them to give names to all the animals. He also told them that they had to look after everything in the world - to make sure that fruit and vegetables grew healthily, that trees

grew strong, that the animals, birds and fish were well cared for. God knew that human beings could do this.

And God looked at what he had made and he was very pleased with everything. “This is very good,” he said.

And after this, God rested. It was not that he was tired. It was just that he had created everything that was in his grand design. He was satisfied that it was complete. It was very good!

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Heaven’s voice brings the dawn Resound Worship by permission

Prayer: Living God, as you give us the opportunity in worship to hear your Word, may these thoughts be part of that worship and praise and may we each consider what response it is you ask of us today. Amen

Reflection – Creation: do we care?

This week has seen an increase in political and social engagement in matters about climate change, propelled into our news with the marking of Earth Day on Thursday. President Biden hosted a world - wide online conference where responsibilities and goals on a national and international basis were raised. Earth Day – what is this? Do you care? After all there seems to be a ‘day’ for everything nowadays!

Earth Day is intended as a time of celebration of our planet as well as a time to discuss climate change action. This year's theme is 'restore our Earth' which focuses on natural processes, green technologies and new ways that can restore the world's ecosystems. So it is apt that our joint *'In Touch'* magazine has, on its cover, a quote from Psalm 24:1 'The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it'. And also that Hugh introduced us to some actions we could take in the light of the Earth Day ideals in the magazine. And Grace showed us how she has taken action & been rewilding by having an unmown lawn area to provide food, shelter and breeding environments for different creepy crawlies.

These are ways in which we **do** show we care about our world & are caring for it because Christianity can, in my view, sometimes be perceived as narrowing its focus solely to the personal. 'My faith is about me and my own well-being and private spiritual life, and above all about my own going to heaven.' But the scriptures tell us that God creates and loves the whole world of oceans and rocks, plants and animals, and human beings are created to be part of that great harmony. It doesn't hurt to remember that human beings are created last of all in the creation story and charged, by God, to care for the animals, plants etc. And to recall that in the story of Noah, God only saves a few human beings but lots of animals, breeding pairs of bio - diverse groups which far outnumbered the humans identified in the story, so the earth could be restored. Just a little perspective!

And in this Easter season, when we remember with joy the resurrection of Christ and shout out loudly ‘He is Risen’, taking the time Earth Day gives us - to see that climate change & restoring our world to sustain all its creatures and plant life could actually be an opportunity to actively be His resurrection people.

Our retelling of the Creation narrative this morning shows we are all connected in what is God’s world. In Dostoyevsky’s novel *The Brothers Karamazov*, the spiritual teacher Father Zosima puts our interconnectedness this way:

“All is like an ocean, all flows and connects; touch it in one place and it echoes at the other end of the world... Love all of God’s creation, both the whole of it and every grain of sand. Love every leaf, every ray of God’s light. Love animals, love plants, love each thing. If you love each thing you will perceive the mystery of God in things.”

Whether you favour the amazing knowledge and research of scientific explanation or the beauty of an ancient civilisation writing down a narrative based on their culture and time, it remains a miracle that we are here at all, and able to praise God. And I am sure there is joy in Heaven when human beings look at all that surrounds them, celebrate our planet, and express gratitude and praise for the beauty of creation. When healing and health comes from just being with nature. When a child sees treasure in the shapes of leaves, in a conker, in a flower or a woodland. And this gift is given to us on trust, as stewards and caretakers of this creation.

This focus on Earth Day, whatever your view on having 'days' nominated for different themes, provides an opportunity to reflect on the beauty of creation and how we look after, rather than consume it, setting aside any sense of entitlement so we don't forget that generation after generation following us will not only need what we have wasted or consumed, but will have to deal with the impact of many previous generations' expectations and good intentions that bring us to where we are today.

We have too easily, it seems, fallen in to thinking that we are in charge of creation, as if it had been given to us to use up rather than to care for it. We come to that conclusion because we believe God has given us 'dominion' over the earth. But surely in that power of governance and control comes the responsibility for care too? What is our responsibility in this situation we find ourselves today? Most people try to do their bit with recycling, packaging awareness and monitoring energy usage, but I think possibly, deep down, we might consider the forces at play are too big and overwhelming for us to address.

So rather than lamenting the impact that we see on the climate, on the weather, in our communities, should we consider a way for Church to not only speak out but to act in a way that makes people sit up? After all, if each of us individually and as a community of Christians won't help lead this change in attitude and action, who will? God doesn't ask each of us if our government or country is doing its part in caring for and taking action to help protect & change what's

happening – but are you doing yours? It's time to act and as we plan to open our doors in the coming months, part of that planning surely is to ask what God asks of us personally and as a church in restoring this planet.

So, even if you take nothing else away from today's worship, at least ask yourself in the quiet of God given darkness and in the joy of God given light, what more can we do as individuals, as a church and as a community to act in new ways in order to make a difference. Go for a walk on heathland, moor land, garden, grass, woodland or forest and remind yourself just how good it is and worth saving.

Experience how lifted your spirits feel after time in a beautiful landscape and prayerfully consider those who will hopefully walk there in the future; like the Israelites in an alien land and another time developing a narrative that reflects hope and blessing we too should think about what story we intend to tell our descendants and imagine whether it will be a story of hope and blessing of something that is good. Will it be recounted with joy and laughter, or some frightening alternative?

Fundamentally, we should consider, would God look with joy at what we are making of this beautiful earth and how we, as His resurrection people are taking action? Would God still pronounce that he is pleased with everything and say to us and our descendants it is very good?

Prayers of Concern

We pray for the Church: that she may be a beacon of hope throughout the world, reminding us all of our responsibility to care for and protect God's precious gift of creation.

Lord wake us from our slumber **to become a resurrection people**

We pray for the world, our common home: that through God's grace we may hear its cry of the damage done and be moved to protect it for future generations to enjoy.

Lord wake us from our slumber **to become a resurrection people**

We pray for those people who are already facing droughts, floods and storms: that God may grant them strength and hope for the future as they work to adapt to the changing climate.

Lord wake us from our slumber **to become a resurrection people**

We pray for each of our churches and our local communities: that through the grace of God we may hear the urgent cry of the earth and of the poor and be inspired to respond at this critical time.

Lord wake us from our slumber **to become a resurrection people**

We pray for the world we live in: that God may open our eyes to recognise the goodness of all creation and help us to do what we can to restore and care for the wonderful gift that we have been given.

Lord wake us from our slumber **to become a resurrection people**

We pray for world leaders: that God may grant them wisdom to make just decisions which respect the earth and all that lives in it, especially those who are poorest and most vulnerable.
Lord wake us from our slumber **to become a resurrection people**

We pray that through God's grace we may be good neighbours to all humanity and all species, making reparation for damage done and restoring and caring for all that God has made.
Lord wake us from our slumber **to become a resurrection people** Amen

Hymn: Great is thy faithfulness
Words by Thomas O. Chisholm
Sung by Ruth Everingham

Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father,
There is no shadow of turning with thee.
Thou changest not, thy compassions, they fail not.
As thou hast been thou forever wilt be.
Great is thy faithfulness!
Great is thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see.
All I have needed thy hand hath provided.
Great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!

Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest,
sun, moon, and stars in their courses above,
join with all nature in manifold witness
to thy great faithfulness, mercy, and love.

Great is thy faithfulness!
Great is thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see.
All I have needed thy hand hath provided.
Great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!
Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,
thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide,
strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow;
blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!
Great is thy faithfulness!
Great is thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see.
All I have needed thy hand hath provided.
Great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me! (x2)

Blessing

May God the Father, creator of our world,
give you grace to be wise stewards of his creation.
May God the Son, who redeemed the world,
inspire you to find joy in the seasons of life.
May God the Holy Spirit, whose breath fills the whole of
creation,
help you to take the fruits of love, joy and peace into the week
ahead. Amen.

Closing music: All things bright and beautiful

Opening music from [Think of a world without any flowers \(StF 92\) \(methodist.org.uk\)](https://www.methodist.org.uk)

Closing music: https://www.smallchurchmusic.com/Snippet/CAM_S-AllThingsBright-Pipe01C-40-CAM_1176786317.mp3

Hymns: Great is thy faithfulness Ruth Everingham,
Everingham Music played in worship at St.Peter's Church
Canterbury. No permission required.

[Praise to the Lord, the Almighty - Google Drive](#) Newcastle
Cathedral Virtual Choir

Images: School mural, Greytown, New Zealand [Liturgies
responding to climate change — Operation Noah, UK |
Worship Words](#) There's a Light by Scott Ward, Story of
Creation by Twelve Baskets & Space: Simple by Jonathan
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