

**Worship for Environment Sunday (complete text. A video version is also online)**  
**Keep safe. Keep caring. Keep praying.**

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*Today is Environment Sunday, and in recognition of that our reflection comes from Rev Audrey Simpson who is minister of Stratford Methodist Church, as well as Henley in Arden. Stratford was the first Methodist Church in the country to be awarded a gold Eco Church award. Thank you to Audrey, and to the others who have been involved in preparing our worship: our Superintendent minister Peter Powers who brings us our bible readings, the Revs Barbara Greenwood and Jeongsook Kim for preparing the prayers, and to Tim Pearson for choosing and leading some of our worship songs. Thank you also to Kate Tennyson for pulling it all together. If any of you would like to take part, then please get in touch with Peter on [revpeter.mwc@gmail.com](mailto:revpeter.mwc@gmail.com)*

THE PREPARATION

*Call to worship*

Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess his name.

StF 137 –New every morning is the love

- 1. New every morning is the love  
our wakening and uprising prove;  
through sleep and darkness safely brought,  
restored to life, and power, and thought.**
- 2. New mercies, each returning day  
hover around us while we pray;  
new perils past, new sins forgiven,  
new thoughts of God, new hopes of heaven.**
- 3. If on our daily course our mind  
be set to hallow all we find,  
new treasures still, of countless price,  
God will provide for sacrifice.**

- 4. Old friends, old scenes, will lovelier be,  
as more of heaven in each we see;  
some softening gleam of love and prayer  
shall dawn on every cross and care.**
- 5. The trivial sound, the common task,  
will furnish all we ought to ask;  
room to deny ourselves, a road  
to bring us daily nearer God.**
- 6. Prepare us, Lord, in your dear love  
for perfect rest with you above;  
and help us, this and every day,  
to live more nearly as we pray.**

*Prayer of approach*

Loving God, we have come to worship you.  
**Help us to remember that you are here with us.  
May we pray to you in faith,  
sing your praise with gratitude,  
and listen to your word with eagerness;  
through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

*Prayer of adoration*

Praise be to you, O God,  
the maker of the universe,  
**by whose wisdom we are created and  
sustained.**

Praise be to you, O God,  
the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
**by whose love we are redeemed and forgiven.**

Praise be to you, O God,  
the source of all holiness,  
**by whose Spirit we are made whole  
and brought to perfection.**

**Praise be to you, O God,  
Source of all being,  
Eternal Word and Holy Spirit,**

as it was in the beginning, is now  
and shall be for ever. Amen.

*Prayer of confession*

Let us confess our sins.

Loving God,

**We have sinned against you  
in what we have thought, said and done.  
We have not loved you with our whole heart;  
we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves.  
We are truly sorry  
and turn away from what is wrong.  
Forgive us for the sake of your Son,  
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

This is his gracious word:

‘Your sins are forgiven.’

**Amen. Thanks be to God**

StF 65 – Sing of the Lord’s goodness

1. **Sing of the Lord’s goodness, Father of all  
wisdom,  
come to him and bless his name.  
Mercy he has shown us, his love is for ever,  
faithful to the end of days.**

***Come then, all you nations,  
sing of your Lord’s goodness,  
melodies of praise and thanks to God.  
Ring out the Lord’s glory,  
praise him with your music,  
worship him and bless his name.***

2. **Power he has wielded, honour is his  
garment,  
risen from the snares of death.  
His word he has spoken, one bread he has  
broken,  
new life he now gives to all.**

***Come then, all you nations,  
sing of your Lord’s goodness,  
melodies of praise and thanks to God.  
Ring out the Lord’s glory,***

***praise him with your music,  
worship him and bless his name.***

3. **Courage in our darkness, comfort in our  
sorrow,  
Spirit of our God most high;  
solace for the weary, pardon for the sinner,  
splendour of the loving God.**

***Come then, all you nations,  
sing of your Lord’s goodness,  
melodies of praise and thanks to God.  
Ring out the Lord’s glory,  
praise him with your music,  
worship him and bless his name.***

4. **Praise him with you singing, praise him with  
the trumpet,  
praise him with the lute and harp;  
praise him with the cymbals, praise him  
with your dancing,  
praise God till the end of days.**

***Come then, all you nations,  
sing of your Lord’s goodness,  
melodies of praise and thanks to God.  
Ring out the Lord’s glory,  
praise him with your music,  
worship him and bless his name.***

THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

*1<sup>st</sup> Reading          Genesis 1:1-2:4*

*The Beginning*

<sup>1:1</sup>In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. <sup>2</sup>Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

<sup>3</sup>And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. <sup>4</sup>God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. <sup>5</sup>God called the light “day,” and the darkness he called “night.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.

<sup>6</sup>And God said, “Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water.” <sup>7</sup>So God made the vault and separated the water under the vault from the water above it. And it was so.

<sup>8</sup>God called the vault “sky.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day.

<sup>9</sup>And God said, “Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear.” And it was so. <sup>10</sup>God called the dry ground “land,” and the gathered waters he called “seas.” And God saw that it was good.

<sup>11</sup>Then God said, “Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds.” And it was so. <sup>12</sup>The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. <sup>13</sup>And there was evening, and there was morning—the third day.

<sup>14</sup>And God said, “Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark sacred times, and days and years, <sup>15</sup>and let them be lights in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth.” And it was so. <sup>16</sup>God made two great lights—the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. <sup>17</sup>God set them in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth, <sup>18</sup>to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. <sup>19</sup>And there was evening, and there was morning—the fourth day.

<sup>20</sup>And God said, “Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the vault of the sky.” <sup>21</sup>So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living thing with which the water teems and that moves about in it, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. <sup>22</sup>God blessed them and said,

“Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth.” <sup>23</sup>And there was evening, and there was morning—the fifth day.

<sup>24</sup>And God said, “Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground, and the wild animals, each according to its kind.” And it was so. <sup>25</sup>God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

<sup>26</sup>Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”

<sup>27</sup>So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

<sup>28</sup>God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

<sup>29</sup>Then God said, “I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. <sup>30</sup>And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food.” And it was so.

<sup>31</sup>God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.

<sup>2:1</sup>Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array.

<sup>2</sup>By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. <sup>3</sup>Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he

rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

<sup>4</sup>This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, when the Lord God made the earth and the heavens.

*Psalm Psalm 8*

<sup>1</sup>Lord, our Lord,  
how majestic is your name in all the earth!  
You have set your glory  
in the heavens.

<sup>2</sup>Through the praise of children and infants  
you have established a stronghold against  
your enemies,  
to silence the foe and the avenger.

<sup>3</sup>When I consider your heavens,  
the work of your fingers,  
the moon and the stars,  
which you have set in place,

<sup>4</sup>what is mankind that you are mindful of them,  
human beings that you care for them?

<sup>5</sup>You have made them a little lower than the  
angels  
and crowned them with glory and honour.

<sup>6</sup>You made them rulers over the works of your  
hands;  
you put everything under their feet:

<sup>7</sup>all flocks and herds,  
and the animals of the wild,

<sup>8</sup>the birds in the sky,  
and the fish in the sea,  
all that swim the paths of the seas.

<sup>9</sup>Lord, our Lord,  
how majestic is your name in all the earth!

*Gospel Matthew 28:16-20*

*The Great Commission*

<sup>16</sup>Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to  
the mountain where Jesus had told them to go.

<sup>17</sup>When they saw him, they worshiped him; but  
some doubted. <sup>18</sup>Then Jesus came to them and  
said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has  
been given to me. <sup>19</sup>Therefore go and make

disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the  
name of the Father and of the Son and of the  
Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup>and teaching them to obey  
everything I have commanded you. And surely I  
am with you always, to the very end of the age."

*Sermon*

My diary informs me that I should've been at  
Stratford this Sunday to lead worship on  
Environment Sunday. I was going to suggest the  
church raise money as part of a challenge for  
100 churches to raise £100 for the planting of  
trees in different parts of the world. Of course  
everything has changed – not just our diaries –  
though I think as a congregation we will find a  
way of being one of the 100 churches raising  
£100 to plant trees so essential in maintaining  
the life sustaining biodiversity of creation at a  
time when the earth is struggling. If you would  
like to join in with the challenge let me know.

With Stratford being an Eco church I'm asked  
sometimes 'What has ecology to do with  
Christianity'?

I answer that it is firstly to do with theology and  
our understanding of God and then secondly  
because of the day and age in which we live.

Well we have two readings today that go some  
way to holding before us an understanding of  
God and our relationship with creation.

The Genesis reading - don't you just love it –  
gives us a wonderful picture of God creating all  
things. In my mind's eye I see delight on God's  
face at the stages of creation – I see God like an  
artist stand back – rub His hands and pronounce  
it good.

The Genesis reading informs our understanding  
of God. Here is:

God from whom all things come.

God who delights in creation.

God who reveals that creation is good.

Then in v 28 and 29 God entrusts this wondrous biodiverse creation into the care of humanity.

So there you have it – what does ecology have to do with us – everything according to Genesis 1 – our home is God’s creation and we have been entrusted with its care.

In addition we live in a day and age when as the earth struggles and perhaps like never before, that call upon us is critical.

We hear the same kind of awareness in Psalm 8. Again I picture this scripture in my mind. I see the shepherd out in the evening, looking at the big star-laden sky. You know how it is when you look up and out just how small you feel. So, so small, insignificant in the vast scheme of things. He ponders ‘who am I’? The wondrous spiritual awareness he comes to is that though he is small, he is known, he does matter, he is not without purpose – he is cherished by God and is called as a steward of God’s beloved creation.

As people of faith the care of the planet has everything to do with us and particularly as the earth is stressed in our day and age.

I was talking with a colleague the other day who said he had set his congregation the challenge of listing 10 good things about the lockdown. A tall order – I haven’t got to 10.

Top of my list is a deeper appreciation of and sense of connection with my surroundings – in particular the garden. Confession time – I have not tended my garden as I should. It is just shy of being a bit of a jungle. However, in lockdown I have been gardening like nobody’s business - Weeding and cutting back, digging and planting. I am loving it and all the wonderful cacophonous birdsong, myriad of creatures, movements and shapes, sounds and fragrances that goes with it. Maybe a deeper appreciation of nature would be on your list too.

I hope when we emerge from lockdown I will be further engaged in responding to the call upon me to be a steward of creation and not turn my back on the holiness I have found in the garden.

In a moment we will hear a poem by ‘Tomfoolery’ which encourages humanity to take on board such care of the earth.

*Poem “The Great Realisation”*

by Tomos Robertson, Tomfoolery.

*Voice of little boy:*

Tell me the one about the virus again, then I’ll go to bed.

*Man on screen:*

But my boy, you’re growing weary, sleepy thoughts about your head

*Voice of little boy:*

Please, that one’s my favourite, I promise just once more.

*Man on screen:*

Okay. Snuggle down my boy, though I know you know full well

The story starts before then, in a world I once would dwell.

It was a world of waste and wonder, of poverty and plenty

Back before we understood why hindsight’s 2020.

You see, the people came up with companies to trade across all lands

But they swelled and got much bigger than we ever could have planned.

We’d always had our wants, but now it got so quick,

You could have anything you dreamed of, in a day, and with a click.

We noticed families had stopped talking; that’s not to say they never spoke

But the meaning must have melted, and the work life balance broke.

And the children's eyes grew squarer and every toddler had a phone,

They filtered out the imperfections but amidst the noise, they felt alone.

And every day the skies grew thicker, until you couldn't see the stars,

So we flew in planes to find them, while down below we filled our cars.

We'd drive around all day in circles, we'd forgotten how to run.

We swapped the ground for tarmac, shrunk the parks 'til there were none.

We filled the sea with plastic because our waste was never capped.

Until each day when you went fishing, you'd pull them out already wrapped.

And while we drank and smoked and gambled, our leaders taught us why

It's best to not upset the lobbies, more convenient to die.

But then, in 2020, a new virus came our way.

The governments reacted and told us all to hide away.

But while we all were hidden, amidst the fear, and all the while,

The people dusted off their instincts. They remembered how to smile.

They started clapping to say thank you, and calling up their mums.

And while the car keys gathered dust they would look forward to their runs.

And with the skies less full of voyagers, the earth began to breathe

The beaches bore new wildlife that scuttled off into the seas.

Some people started dancing, some were singing, some were baking.

We'd grown so used to bad news, but some good news was in the making.

And so when we found the cure and were allowed to go outside

We all preferred the world we found to the one we'd left behind.

Old habits became extinct and they made way for the new,

And every single act of kindness was now given its due.

*Voice of little boy:*

But why did it take a virus to bring the people back together?

*Man on screen:*

Well, sometimes, you've got to get sick, my boy, before you start feeling better.

Now lie down and dream of tomorrow, and all the things that we can do

And, who knows, if you dream hard enough maybe some of them will come true.

We now call it The Great Realisation and yes, since then there have been many.

But that's the story of how it started it, and why hindsight's 2020

THE RESPONSE

*Prayers of thanksgiving*

Colourful, creator God,  
we give you thanks for the times  
when through the beauty of creation  
we have glimpsed the true nature of the Trinity;  
the times when through another's love  
we have glimpsed the inclusiveness of the  
Trinity.

Deepen our appreciation of all that is around us  
and increase our sense of mutual dependence,  
that we may celebrate diversity, delight in  
difference and be drawn into life-giving  
relationships that honour all you have made

and all that we are.

**Amen.**

StF 286 –What kind of love is this

- 1. What kind of love is this  
that gave itself for me?  
I am the guilty one,  
yet I go free.  
What kind of love is this,  
a love I've never known;  
I didn't even know his name –  
what kind of love is this?**
- 2. What kind of man is this,  
that died in agony?  
He who had done no wrong  
was crucified for me.  
What kind of man is this,  
who laid aside his throne  
that I may know the love of God –  
what kind of man is this?**
- 3. By grace I have been saved;  
it is the gift of God.  
He destined me to be his own  
such is his love.  
No eye has ever seen,  
no ear has ever heard,  
nor has the human heart conceived  
what kind of love is this?**

*Prayers of intercession*

Generous God,  
when we look at the world you have given us,  
we see beauty, bounty and infinite possibility,  
a creation full of wonder and delight.

Silence

You have given us so much that is good,  
but we have responded to your gifts  
like spoilt children,  
loving them only for what we could get out of  
them:

we have taken greedily at the earth's resources;  
at land and forest; at fish, animals and birds;  
with no thought for the future of our children  
or the children of the poor.

Silence

Like spoilt children, we have not looked after  
the things that you have entrusted to us.  
We have polluted the air and water,  
making dust bowels of good earth  
and damaging the precious ozone layer;  
with no thought for the future of children  
or the children of the poor.

Silence

We are sorry, loving God.  
Please forgive us and guide us  
into better ways of living in our environment  
before it is too late.

Silence

We pray for those who work and campaign  
for a better stewardship of the earth's resources.  
Help us to support them by doing what we can.  
As we wait in hope for the redemption of all  
creation, through the saving love of your son,  
Jesus Christ,  
grant us the maturity to treat your world  
with the respect it deserves.

Jesus Christ, healer of all, stay by our side in this  
time of uncertainty and sorrow.

Heal those who are sick with the virus and other  
illnesses.

Be with the families of those who are sick or  
have died.

As they worry and grieve,  
defend them from illness and despair.

May they know your peace.

Be with all people working in hospitals and care  
homes and for essential services who put  
themselves at risk in helping and treating those  
affected by the virus.

May they know your protection and peace.

God of mercy, we pray for the life of the world and for those who exercise power (especially in America at the moment).

Show us how to live as members of the human family;

to reject the ways of war and violence;  
to bear each other's burdens and to work together for justice and peace.

Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ.

**Amen.**

*The Lord's Prayer*

We say together the prayer that Jesus gave us:

**Our Father in Heaven,  
Hallowed be your name,  
Your kingdom come,  
Your will be done,  
On earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Save us from the time of trial  
and deliver us from evil,  
For the kingdom, the power and the glory  
are yours, now and forever.  
Amen**

*The Offering & prayer*

Loving God, help us to move beyond 'bread alone'  
and to see that all we have comes from you.  
And show us how to be a generous people,  
giving our money, time, energy and talents  
to share the good news of Jesus with humankind.  
Please accept our willing gifts, and bless them  
and use them for your kingdom.  
In the name of Jesus Christ.  
**Amen.**

THE DISMISSAL

StF 503 - Love divine, all loves excelling

- 1. Love divine, all loves excelling,  
joy of heaven, to earth come down,  
fix in us thy humble dwelling,  
all thy faithful mercies crown.  
Jesu, thou art all compassion,  
pure, unbounded love thou art;  
visit us with thy salvation,  
enter every trembling heart.**
- 2. Come, almighty to deliver,  
let us all thy life receive;  
suddenly return, and never,  
never more thy temples leave.  
Thee we would be always blessing,  
serve thee as thy hosts above,  
pray, and praise thee, without ceasing,  
glory in thy perfect love.**
- 3. Finish then thy new creation,  
pure and spotless let us be;  
let us see thy great salvation,  
perfectly restored in thee:  
changed from glory into glory  
till in heaven we take our place,  
till we cast our crowns before thee,  
lost in wonder, love, and praise!**

*Prayer & blessing*

God, give us strength to endure, compassion to serve others and hope for a brighter tomorrow.

**The love of the Father enfold us,  
the wisdom of the Son enlighten us,  
the fire of the Spirit enflame us;  
and the blessing of God, the Three in One,  
be upon us and abide with us now and for ever.  
Amen.**

We go in peace to love and serve the Lord.  
**In the name of Christ. Amen.**