

REFLECTIONS ON OUR PLACE IN CREATION

Bidding: *And [God] showed me more, a little thing, the size of a hazelnut, on the palm of my hand, round like a ball. I looked at it thoughtfully and wondered, 'What is this?' And the answer came, 'It is all that is made.' I marvelled that it continued to exist and did not suddenly disintegrate; it was so small. And again my mind supplied the answer, 'It exists, both now and forever, because God loves it.'*

Julian of Norwich 'Revelations of Divine Love' Chapter 5

OR

*You are worthy, our Lord and God: to receive glory and honour and power.
For you have created all things: and by your will they have their being.
To the one who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honour and glory
and might, for ever and ever. Amen*

Revelation 4.11; 5.10

Opening Hymn TIS 100, 186 (alt melody 192), 187, 671

Creator God, open our hearts and minds through the inspiration of your Holy Spirit to the life and love you give to the whole of creation.

We thank you for the abundance of your creation.

We celebrate the diversity of life on this planet.

We join with all of creation in praising you.

**We pray that you will open our hearts and minds
to hear the voice of creation, to praise you on behalf of all creation,
and to come to know our true place in relationship with the earth and with you.**

**Open our hearts to the mysteries of your creative love, that we may learn more
of you, love more fully and become wiser stewards of all that you have made.**

Amen.

Reading 1. Where were you?

Job 38: 1-7

Silence

Prayer or meditation

Lord of all creation, you who laid the foundation of the earth, our understanding is limited. We pray for wisdom, to honour your creation, to sing together with the morning stars and all beings. Amen

Hymn or Chant TIS 143, 167, 715 (round)

Reading 2. The Lord planted a Garden

Genesis 2: 8-9, 15-17

Silence

Prayer or meditation

Lord of the Garden, you created us within the midst of the garden of Life. We recognize our place amidst all of creation. We pray that all humanity will know discernment and the limits of our use of the bounty of the garden. Amen

Hymn or Chant TIS 135 156, 170, 190, TW Like a Tree or Seeds Planted

Reading 3. The fields

Song of S. 2:10-13

Silence

Prayer or meditation

Lord of Love, you invite us to know ourselves as beloved. We pray that we may come to wonder at the beauty of your love throughout all creation and respond to our call with grace. Amen

Hymn or Chant TIS 130, 159, 168, 627, TW All is Wonder

Reading 4. The seas

Ps 104: 24-34

Silence

Prayer or meditation

Lord of the Seas, great and wide, we give thanks for the innumerable diversity of your creation. We grieve the loss of diversity and pray that humanity will come together to halt the destruction of all species both small and great. Amen

Hymn or Chant TIS 166, 176, TW All is like an Ocean

Reading 5. The forests

Ps 96: 10-13

Silence

Prayer or meditation

Lord of the Forests, you have made us to know joy. May we exult with the trees, with the country as we look towards your saving justice and live in cooperation with your action in this world. Amen

Hymn or Chant TIS 163 (alt melody 232), 188, TW Like a Tree

Reading 6. Good and Evil

Amos 7: 14-15; 8:4-7

Silence

Confession

Heavenly Father, we thank you for this earth which you have created and we recognise that we are your servant people, created out of the earth itself.

Yet we turn our backs on your creation. Our lives are marked by selfishness and greed. What is meant for good, we have used for evil. We have used and abused this earth, our home. Too often, we take the gifts you hold out to us and use them for our own selfish desires. We trample upon the works of your hands, leaving a trail of waste and destruction. We give too little thought to the needs of other people, or the needs of your creation.

Forgive us Lord for thinking of ourselves and ignoring the needs of other people, and of generations not yet born. Forgive us for forgetting that everything in the world belongs to you.

Help us to live more simply. Help us to understand that we are part of creation, that we are your stewards in it. And make us instruments of the renewal of your creation. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Declaration of God's forgiveness

The psalmist says

"Those who love me, I will deliver;
I will protect those who know my name.
When they call to me, I will answer them,
I will be with them in trouble,
I will rescue them and honour them.
With long life I will satisfy them,
and show them my salvation."

God is love and life. We are the beloved children of God, forgiven, renewed and sent out into the world to work for healing and justice, hope and wholeness, in faithfulness to God.

Amen.

Reading 7. From His fullness we have received

John 1: 1-5, 10-14

Silence

Prayer or meditation

Lord of all beginnings, we give thanks for your Light and Life, your presence in this world, in us. We pray that humanity will come to know you in creation and in knowing you come to a greater love of the gift of life. Amen

Hymn or Chant TIS 133 (if not using 188), 672, TW I am the Land or Source of Being,

(The collection could be taken at this point)

Reading 8. The earth groans

Rom. 8: 18-25

Silence

Prayer or meditation

Redeemer God, we hear the groans of all creation waiting for us to be revealed as our children. We pray that as we work for justice we may also live in hope and eager longing for the redemption of all creation. Amen

Hymn or Chant TIS 157, 169, 174 (alt melody 219), 668, TW Choose Life or All Will Be Well or See I make all Things New

Reading 9. Firstborn of all Creation

Col. 1: 15-20 *To be read in unison, all standing*

Silence

Final prayers

**Holy God, Spirit of the Great Dreaming of all Creation
Enliven us to act for justice and healing of this earth,
Inspire us to live lives of simplicity and sustainability,
Break open our hearts to the needs of the earth and her creatures,
Fill us with hope and a burning hunger for your presence and peace. Amen**

Blessing and dismissal

May the blessing of God be within us and amongst us,
May we be a blessing to the earth and she to us.
May we be seeds of renewal and hope.

The Peace of God, the Love of Christ, the Breath of the Spirit
Be with you as you go.

Hymn or Chant TIS 105, 755, 778, 781, TW Sacred Path or This Vision;

Notes

It would be helpful to include visual images in the service: possibilities include slides of master paintings on the themes for each reading, photographs of creation relevant to each reading, displays of local material representing creation or creative work in the district, etc.

We urge those using this service with hymns to use the modern rather than the traditional alternatives offered.

The address, if there is to be one, should be after the last reading and before the final prayers.

The 'Prayer and meditation' sections may consist simply of the set prayer as a response to the reading or, in some or all cases, include more extended material. A period of silence to allow time for personal reflection on the reading, before the prayers, is important.

The approach to this service could be celebratory, or contemplative. This will be largely set by the nature of the music used. To this end two forms of music are included: a set of possible songs and hymns plus a set of chants. Obviously a mixture of the two forms can be used. Other music or a combination of styles could also be used. (TIS; *Together in Song*, TW, Trisha Watts and Gabriel Lord, *Sanctuary: where heaven touches earth*). Electronic versions of the TIS hymns can be obtained via E-pray.

Suggestions from *Together in Song* (TIS)

- 100 All creatures of our God and King
- 105 Let all the world in every corner sing
- 130 We plough the fields and scatter
- 133 O worship the king all glorious above
- 135 All things bright and beautiful
- 143 Immortal, invisible, God only wise
- 156 Morning has broken
- 157 O Lord of every shining constellation
- 159 God whose form is all creation
- 163 God, who stretched the spangled heavens
- 166 Creation sings a new song to the Lord
- 167 How deep the riches of our God
- 168 For the fruits of all creation
- 169 Our God, we know your providence
- 170 Thank you, thank you Lord
- 174 Morning glory, starlit sky
- 176 The sounds of God's world all agree
- 186 Stars and galaxies flung in orbit
- 187 Let all creation dance
- 188 Where wide sky rolls down and touches red sand
- 190 Colourful Creator, God of mystery
- 627 Praise and thanksgiving
- 668 Touch the earth lightly
- 671 Birds of the mountains, sing of your praises

672 Lord of earth and all creation
715 Everything that has breath, praise the Lord
755 You shall go out in joy and be led forth in peace
778 Shalom to you now, shalom my friends
781 Father bless us as we go

Some other possibilities are:

Lord of Creation (*Australian Hymn Book*, 557)

Dance and sing, all the earth (*Iona Community*)

We will not take what is not ours (*Iona Community*)

While earth remains (*Iona Community*)

Brother sun, sister moon (*John Michael Talbot*)

God who made the endless stars (*Elizabeth J. Smith "Songs for a hopeful church" 15*)

O Spirit Come! Refresh us now (*Elizabeth J. Smith "Songs for a hopeful church" 36*)

Mother Earth (*from "As One Voice"*)

Canticle to the Sun (*from "As One Voice"*)