

Welcome

HYMN Morning has broken, like the first morning

Introduction

The service will then concentrate on the environment and our churches response to the science that tells us that our planet is warming further than is sustainable - emphasis.

Let us start by offering our prayers for other people.

Prayers for other people

Dear God,

We wonder how people can be so cruel. How those in power seem to think that people are not important especially if they live in a different country or speak a different language or have a different skin tone. Help us always to remember that other people are our brothers, sisters and neighbours in You.

We ask you .....

**Dear God hear our prayers for them and help them to know that they are not forgotten.**

This morning especially we think of all the people and communities that are impacted by Global Warming. Many must feel that they are bearing the brunt of the rich nations' greed and that their plight is not fully understood, acknowledged or seriously considered as they watch governments talk the talk but so often fail to act decisively.

**Dear God hear our prayers for them and help them to know that they are not forgotten.**

Lord, we are your eyes and ears, your hands, feet and mouth in this time and this place. Guide us not to turn away from the depressing stories that come to us from around the world but lead us to right actions to help those we hear about.

**Dear God hear our prayers for them and help them to know that they are not forgotten.**

And we say together *The Lord's Prayer*

Talk

The Methodist Church is revitalising its justice heritage through the project called Walking with Micah which I have talked of before. One of the topics within that is Justice for the Environment.

I wonder what we think justice for the environment means.

As you start reading about the effects of global warming you realise that many different groups look at the environment from many points of concern.

Previously we have talked of Christian stewardship of the environment and given the findings and discussions of CoP26 in November last year and the predictions of scientists that the increasing

levels of global warming will cause catastrophic results we know exactly how far short our stewardship has fallen.

We have talked before about how global warming is affecting sea levels and livelihoods in many countries and yet governments and authorities struggle to take appropriate actions. Since CoP26 we have had the senseless war in Ukraine which is making the situation worse not just in its current destruction but in the rebuilding that must take place in due time - the production of concrete is a high energy process.

We acknowledge the effect of global warming on many people in vulnerable communities and do not diminish its impact but today I wanted to look more at the world that we live in every day and the way that it is also being impacted.

During our services of worship we sing hymns that often idealise a life that is familiar to us but which nonetheless invoke memories and a feeling of well-being.

Our next hymn is one of those

HYMN We plough the fields and scatter

### Readings

*1 Corinthians 13; 1,2; 11 - 13*

*Through a glass darkly*

### Link between readings

As adults we see the world and our surrounding very differently from the way that children look at things. In many ways as adults we become less accepting of what is in front of us and more cynical and judgemental. When we have children around us we are reminded of the simplicity, joy and awe of what they see. The joy of blowing bubbles, the melting of snowflakes as you catch them in your hand and the fragility of a rainbow are all amazing to a child. I remember Philip on a visit to Chessington Zoo being astounded by the size of an elephant – he had thought from picture books that it would be the size of a dog and Ella just recently being slightly scared of the animatronic dinosaurs at Rusden Lakes - ‘will it eat me?’ she wondered, getting very confused between reality and imagination. It is with this acceptance and without our adult sub-texts that I want us to listen to this next reading.

*Genesis 1*

*Creation story*

### Talk 1

How amazing is our Earth? But we get jaded.

Sometimes we see new parts of our environment and are amazed:

The beauty of the planet when first seen from space, the wildness that is typically Scotland, the strangeness of geological formations – Durdle Dor; the offshore island volcanic plug that is St Michael’s Mount, the vastness of skies in East Anglia.

Sometimes there are places that call to our souls (*adapt*)

*Ask for other thoughts*

Sometimes we need to see things with fresh eyes or to stop and really look at something with the wonder of children. When we were in lock-down many people started taking walks in their local area and reconnected with the local landscape.

How often do we admire the grasses and wildflowers that grow all around us – I wonder what is your favourite? Mine are (*adapt*)

*Ask for other thoughts*

Sometimes we make new discoveries that amaze us – although these may be through television programmes, they may also be personal experiences, I was astounded to discover not so long ago that pineapples grow in fields and not on trees. Sometimes we just reexperience things that we find marvellous, the unfurling of fern frond, the silver ‘pennies’ revealed in honesty plants as the outer coat falls off, the dancing dropping of a sycamore seed, the perfection of a baby’s foot.  
(*adapt*)

It is not just the sight of things that enchants us. It can be sound, maybe of a cuckoo heralding the spring or a blackbird singing in the tree. Our joy in the summer is enhanced by the smell of roses or the ozone of the sea or possibly by the taste of fresh strawberries.

We are surrounded by amazing phenomena and as we rejoice in our ability to see, smell hear and touch we feel blessed almost beyond words.

Maybe this what we mean by Justice for the Environment - for nature to be free to exist without constraints or deterioration for all people to be able to have the time, the energy and the freedom to enjoy the world that surrounds them?

HYMN We thank thee Lord for this fair earth

Prayers of thanksgiving

Talk 2.

How secure is this world of ours?

We tend to think that climate change affects other countries but a recent state of nature report 2019 - looks at how human activity impacts are driving sweeping changes in wildlife across the UK.

The activity that imposes most is agricultural practices and the second is climate change where there is growing evidence that it is driving widespread and rapid changes in the UK’s wildlife. It has already impacted population trends of a 40% decline of moths and a 60% increase of aphids. There was a temperature increase of 1° in the last 10 years compared to the 1960s, with 6% more sunshine 8% more rain and less ground frost. Sea levels have risen by 16cm (6.5”) since the beginning of the century.

And if this is impacting us here in our temperate and rich country how much worse must it be in countries where the eco structure is more fragile, or resources are stretched so that care for the environment is overshadowed by the immediacy of need to feed families, to defend your population from hostility to physically hold back the rising sea levels?

We have to work harder and use our influence to limit these changes.

Whenever I see a Red Kite I am filled with hope – and this where it is actually useful to understand the backstory. When I went to university in 1969 we were given lecture after lecture on the destructive effect on wild-life of the insecticide DDT so that a number of species were becoming rare or extinct. So strong was the public reaction that the use of DDT was banned in 1986. In 1990 13 birds were re-introduced from Wales and Spain and released near Oxford. Now their distinctive forked tails can be commonly seen as they soar in the sky. The destructiveness of mankind has in this case been reversed. (*adapt*)

And what does this mean if we are basing this service on Eco-church? Surely if we appreciate the beauty of the Earth then we must strive to protect it not only for ourselves but for generations of to come. We must find a way to protect it, to enhance it, however small our contribution may seem, we must make the effort to do play our part. We need to turn around climate change just as we turned around the effect of DDT fifty years ago.

In the next week or so I will be dusting off our eco-church achievements and exploring what we could do next to make a small difference. The first thing may be to .....

It is not the responsibility of the minister nor the stewards to take the initiative and tell you how we feel our church should respond but for each one of us to think, to ask questions to search for ways in which we can make a difference.

#### Prayer of penitence

Dear God we are sorry when we are greedy or unthinking in our use of the Earth's resources; when we would rather turn on the heating rather than go to the bother of finding a jumper; when we drive our cars on the smallest pretext; when we buy food that we know we will not consume; when we leave the lights on or run the water without thought. Help us to be more careful and more caring of our planet every day that people everywhere may benefit and their lives be stabilised. Travel this journey with us we ask, being our reminder and our conscience as we strive to better stewards of creation. Amen.

HYMN God in his love for us

Collection prayer

The Grace