

CARLOPS PARISH CHURCH ECO SERVICE, 2009

WATER

Hymns are Church Hymnary, Fourth edition (CH4) unless indicated otherwise

Welcome

We'd like to extend a very warm welcome to everyone worshipping with us this morning. And we would like to thank you, the congregation, for giving us the opportunity to present this eco-service.

Our service is based on the *Iona Abbey Worship book* and our theme is "Water" - perhaps the single most important contributor to all life on this earth.

First hymn – No 240: God in such love for us lent us this planet ...

Prayer

We used two voices in this prayer to emphasise its meaning; they are indicated below by interspersed roman and italic type.

Creator spirit, wellspring of our lives, as the refreshing rain falls ion the just and unjust alike

Refresh us with your mercy who knows our own injustice

As the steam flows steadily on, defying all the odds of stone and water

Flow over every boundary and border that separates us from each other

As the waters of our baptism washed over us and welcomed us

Renew us now in newness of life and unity of love

As we were once held in the water of our mother's womb

Hold us in the power and peace of your abiding presence.

And now, let us join together to say the prayer that Jesus taught us.

Our father, which 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 debts, as we forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever.

Amen

Second Hymn – No 187: There's a wideness in God's mercy ...

First talk

Gavin Marshall is an elder in the church in the little village of Carlops, which lies about 12 miles south-west of Edinburgh at the foot of the Pentland Hills.

Gavin and his wife Elaine became very concerned about people in many places in Africa who had no clean, safe drinking water and Gavin decided to do something about it.

He decided to cycle 950 miles along the ancient pilgrim route of St James, from Le Puy in central France to Santiago de Compostela in north-west Spain, and he asked his family and friends to sponsor him on his month-long journey.

It took a great deal of effort, both to do the cycling itself and also, to make all the arrangements for the journey, but it was well worthwhile because Gavin raised £38,000 which he gave to Oxfam to be spent bringing a new well and permanent supply of clean drinking water to the people of the Mongu district of Zambia.

This is Gavin's story, written in his own words.

“Water, water everywhere, and not a single drop of drink!”

That is a quote from one of my favourite authors, Neil Munro, in one of his *Para Handy* stories. Of course, Munro is echoing and maybe poking fun at the famous line in *The rhyme of the ancient mariner*.

It seems an appropriate line for one who has just returned from Zambia, where I saw the incredible work being undertaken to bring water to many needy people in one of the poorer areas of Africa.

Water is something we all take for granted. We have plenty of it – in our reservoirs, lochs and rivers, coming out of our taps, and indeed, all too often, falling on our heads as rain. But it is not until the water is *not* there that you appreciate just how necessary it is.

While we were in Zambia being shown round our Mongu Well project, we were asked if we would like to camp. Because I was frightened of all the creepy-crawlies and all the larger animals that roam through much of Africa, I quickly declined the invitation. I preferred the idea of staying in a hunting lodge, which looks very civilised and just like many hotels in this country.

But it is not quite the same when you go into the bathroom and turn on the tap! Sometimes, water will come out – sometimes, it won't. And there is no way of knowing which it will be!

Use your imagination for a moment.

Imagine you are at home brushing your teeth: if you are like me, you work up a good lather with brush and toothpaste, then you try to rinse it out. But nothing – no water from the tap! So then you have to try to tidy yourself up with a small amount of water out of a bottle – which is probably in another room in the house! Not easy – try it at home some time!

Next, imagine you walk into the bathroom after a day on dusty roads under a hot sun. There on the wall is a modern shower unit, but also, sitting in the bath, is a barrel of cold, rather muddy water. But you find that the shower is just for show – the barrel of cold, muddy water is for washing! I had to do it, so maybe you could try that at home too!

Perhaps surprisingly, there is no shortage of water in western Zambia. Indeed, our trip coincided with the end of the rainy season, a particularly heavy rainy season, and the entire Zambesi river basin was flooded. Homes, crops, everything, were all under water. People had to flee to higher ground, leaving their whole livelihood behind. Yes, no shortage of water – if you are happy drinking and cooking with the same water you wash in, and the cattle paddle in, and which isn't separated from the drains and sewers – for there is no sanitation.

And there's the main problem. Most water is just collected from holes in the ground, or rivers. These sources are shared with cattle and wildlife; drains and water supply intermingle. The water isn't safe to consume and disease is rife.

The main aim of the project Elaine and I have been supporting is to provide a reliable and clean source of water in each village, through the construction of separate wells and boreholes. This clean water will be available throughout the year. But bear in mind that the well will be one outlet, in the middle of the village, and that the water must still be carried to each house, usually in a 20 litre container, carried for several hundreds of metres.

Again, you could try this at home, but I suggest you ask your parents to help – remember – a 20 litre container full of water will weigh about 21 kilograms.

The trip to Zambia was a fascinating, thought-provoking but also humbling experience. Never take anything for granted. Be thankful for water – it is a valuable commodity. And more especially, be thankful for plumbers too!

It was humbling to think of the generosity of so many people in this country – people who had given much of our fund to help others in Africa. And it was even more humbling to witness the gratitude of the people in the Zambian villages.

But what came as a surprise to me was that this giving and helping is not just a one-way thing – we have a lot to learn from the Zambians. There are many ways in which they can help us, if only we will take the trouble to learn – learn especially from their cheerfulness and kindness to each other.

So often, I think that we are too wrapped up in our own very important and busy lives. Yes of course, we must pursue our own lives and be thankful for what we've got – but we must

also think of the needs of others and try to help them.

And you should try doing *that* at home too!

Prayer

Jesus –

Be the canoe that holds me up in the sea of life.
Be the rudder that keeps me on a straight course.
Be the outrigger that supports me in times of temptation.
Let your spirit be the sail that carries me through each day.
Keep my body strong so that I can paddle steadfastly on in the voyage of life.

Amen

Offering

We will continue worshipping God with our offering

Prayer

Heavenly Father, we bring our offerings to be used in your service and ask that the money is spent wisely, according to your will.

Amen

Third (children's) hymn – No 245: It's a world of sunshine, a world of rain

...

Children may go out at this point if desired

Our next prayer is taken from the *Iona Abbey Worship Book* and includes the response “Open your eyes to see”. Please join in the response if you would like to do so.

Prayer

Let us confess that we do not always care for the earth

O God, your fertile earth is slowly being stripped of its riches
Open our eyes to see

O God, your living waters are slowly being choked with chemicals
Open our eyes to see

O God, your clear air is slowly being filled with pollutants
Open our eyes to see

O God, your creatures are slowly dying and your people are suffering
Open our eyes to see

God our maker, so move us by the wonders of creation that we repent and care more deeply;
so move us to grieve the loss of life that we learn to cherish and protect your world

Amen

Second talk

The church in Carlops has a decorative stained glass window by the artist Emma Butler-Cole Aiken. The window is entitled “Living water” and is the inspiration for the theme of this service.

Anyone can see Emma's window on the Internet and read what she herself says about it. Go to www.carlopschurch.org/living_water.html

In her book *Living water – a window for Carlops Church*, she quotes from John, 7: 37-39, and we take our text from that chapter.

“Jesus promises living water.

“On the last day, the climax of the festival, Jesus stood and cried, 'Anyone who is thirsty may come to me. Anyone who believes in me may come and drink. For the scriptures declare “Rivers of living water will flow from his heart.””

The festival referred to was the Festival of Tabernacles, one of the great festivals of the Jewish year.

It was held in the autumn after the grape and olive harvest and it was both a harvest thanksgiving and a commemoration of the settlement of the Jews in the Promised Land, and of the gift of water in the desert.

Part of the ceremonial of the festival was the bringing of palms and willows, and of water fetched from the Pool of Siloam in a golden pitcher which held about two pints. This was brought in procession to the temple and, together with a wine offering, was poured on the altar as a thanksgiving for God's gift of water.

In Jewish thought, these ceremonies were also related to the idea of the pouring out of the Spirit in the last days of time itself.

It is against this background that Jesus, who had been teaching in the temple, stood and cried out “Anyone who is thirsty may come to me. Anyone who believes in me may come and

drink. For the scriptures declare 'Rivers of living water will flow from his heart.'

Professor William Barclay suggests two possible interpretations of this passage. He writes: "It may refer to those who come to Jesus and accept him. Such people will have within them a river of refreshing water. The other interpretation is that 'Rivers of living water will flow from his heart' refers to Jesus himself and it may well be that when John is writing he is thinking of Jesus as the fountain from which the cleansing stream flows."

Professor Barclay concludes "Whether we take the picture as referring to Christ himself, or to those who accept him, it means that from Christ there flow the strength, and power, and cleansing, which alone give us life in the real sense of the term."

Amen

Prayer

Loving God, we hold in your healing presence those who suffer pain and ill health in mind, body or spirit. May they know the deep peace of Christ.

Loving God, we hold in your healing presence the suffering people of your world and the places where they are experiencing division, injustice, violence, hunger and thirst. May they know the deep peace of Christ.

Loving God, we hold in your healing presence the leaders of our world – asking for them, wisdom, vision and courage in this troubled time. May they know the deep peace of Christ.

Loving God, we hold in your healing presence the church in this community and throughout the world. May our hearts respond to your love and may we know the deep peace of Christ.

Flow over your creation, O God, offering to the world the living water of your life, so that the seeds of compassion may break forth in the greening of new possibilities and the blossoming of justice.

Amen

Fourth hymn – No 243: Touch the earth lightly ...

Final reading

For the last part of this service, we will read a poem by Martin Hazell which provides, in a sense, another version of the message that Gavin Marshall's first talk gave.

Whenever I read this piece, I hear the voice of the late Fred Edwards, the inspiration for the establishment of the Carlops Church Eco Group – telling us that we need to keep talking to politicians and decision-makers and telling them what we think – what we think is right – and what they should do, to make the right decision – and to make *the right kind of difference!*"

Martin Hazell was inspired to write this by Isaiah 55: 1, which reads “Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters and drink.”. The poem is entitled “Tap dancing” and as climate change begins to affect us all, its message about the need to share resources and care for the earth becomes ever clearer.

Fresh sparkling water flows through the garden, turning all to a lush green pasture ...
Precious water, life giving water, free-to-all water ...

A tap is turned

The flow is stopped and the hand that turns, holds the power,
reversing the garden to a barren desert.
Creation becomes uncreation,
water and food withdrawn at once.

The children stall and turn,
their eyes of laughter sink into their cheeks,
fit to burst, begging for life.

Water, flowing and pure, against water, stagnant and diseased.
So easily at the turn of a tap.
Life and death, unhappy neighbours, sit side by side.

How is this justice?
Those who have ... those who have not ...
The spring of life is extinguished with the turn of a tap.

Tap, tap, tap,
and the political dance goes on.
The turn of a tap, and life can flow again.
Justice at last, essentials for all.
So easy ... so easy.

We are the brothers and sisters of our world,
sitting side by side,
children who dance in the rainbow of water and light.

Hope for the world.

Final hymn – No 153: Great is thy faithfulness ...

Benediction

You who guided Noah over the flood waves – hear us.
You who stretched out your hand to Peter as he sank – hear us.
Son of God who did marvellous things of old,
Be favourable in our day also.

Sung triple Amen