

# CARLOPS PARISH CHURCH ECO SERVICE, 2010

## BIODIVERSITY

*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.

The biodiversity of our planet – of God's creation – and how it can be preserved, is one of the key issues for the eco-congregation movement and it is the subject of our service this morning.

### First hymn – No 161: O God our help in ages past ...

#### Prayer

Our prayer has a response for those who to join in. The response is “We praise you” and it comes four times in the prayer.

O God the maker; maker of colour, sound, texture, quietness, and the restless beauty in living things

*All* We praise you

O God the maker, maker of granite and mustard seed, of earthquake and heartbeat

*All* We praise you

O God the maker; maker of all that is unseen, of all that has been, of all that words can never capture

*All* We praise you

God our maker; we, the children of your love, the creatures of your kindness, the guardians of your creation

*All* We praise you

We give you thanks for your making; your trusting, your loving, your never-ending goodness

We will now 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

## **Children's Address**

We are going to ask the children to picture this scene in the living room of a family home

Two boys and a girl were sitting quietly on the floor playing a board game, and one older girl was lying on the couch looking at a nature book that had many large brightly coloured pictures in it.

Suddenly the girl with the book interrupted the game and asked “What do you think is the most wonderful thing on earth?”

The others looked up from their game and thought for a while.

One boy said “I think it must be a tree because it starts from a tiny seed or a nut as small as a finger nail and grows to something as high as this house – or even much taller – and becomes the home for thousands of living creatures.”

The second boy said “That’s not as amazing as the fact that all around me there are millions of living things that are so small that I can’t see them at all – even if I use the microscope that I got for my birthday – and I don’t feel them or know that they are there. My teacher was telling us about that at school and I thought it was unbelievable!”

The little girl, who loved drawing bright pictures, had made up her mind. “I think the most wonderful thing is that living things can have so many gorgeous bright colours – like the parrots I saw in the zoo – and the corals I saw in a television programme – and the flowers in the gardens we went to see in Holland last Spring – and lots more that I can’t think about just now.”

The girl with the book said “I think you are all wrong because surely the most wonderful things must be people! They have learned to do so many amazing things. They can make machines that can fly and travel all over the world, and rockets that can go to outer space. They can make submarines that can travel under the sea and all sorts of machines for homes and laboratories and hospitals. – I could go on for ever and that’s more wonderful than anything the rest of you have said!”

I’m sorry to say that things got a bit noisy at this point – with lots of shouting and arguing,

everyone talking at once and trying to make themselves heard above the other loud voices.

You can imagine what it sounded like!

The door opened and the children's Granny came into the room to ask what all the upset was about.

Once things had settled down they asked Granny to choose who was right – who had chosen the most wonderful thing on Earth?

Granny spoke softly. "I think that you have all given very good answers. But I think that what is most wonderful is that all these things you have chosen, and all the other things that you could have said, but have not thought about, can be living on our Earth at the very same time and making such an amazing pattern of life. That seems to me to be the most wonderful thing of all!"

I'm glad to say that the children were happy with Granny's answer and thought that it made perfect sense. They went back to their game and their book and all was quiet in the living room once more.

Granny could have told the children that there is a name for all the different forms of life, sharing the earth and living together. That name is *biodiversity*. The word *biodiversity* is made up from a Greek word and a Latin word. The Greek word *bios* means *life* and the Latin word *diversus* means *in different directions*.

Biodiversity is one of the most precious and wonderful things about the planet earth

## **Prayer**

For life on Earth, in all its diversity of size, shape and colours, we give you thanks O Lord.

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

## **Second (children's) hymn – 137: All things bright and beautiful ...**

*Children may go out at this point if desired*

## **Prayer**

Lord God, through your word you created all that is. In all Creation, your word resonates, so that even the stones proclaim you as Lord, the whales and all that move in the waters, the birds of the air, and the beasts of the wild.

You call all creation to praise and glorify you. But our lips are often silent, our praise unspoken, and our thankfulness forgotten. O Lord our creator, touch our lips and let us speak for you.

You made the earth a home for all creatures, and made it holy by your presence among us, teaching us to love and care for the creatures of the earth. But we often pass by and turn away from those creatures weaker than ourselves, and from those we fear. We are often blind and deaf to their pain through our indifference, greed and carelessness.

Come Holy Spirit, and kindle in us the fire of your love and renew the face of the earth.

Amen

## **First reading: Genesis 1: 11-13 and 20-28**

*We read from "The message – the Bible in contemporary language"; the text follows below*

God spoke: "Earth, green up! Grow all varieties of seed-bearing plants. Every sort of fruit-bearing tree" And there it was. Earth produced green seed-bearing plants, all varieties, and fruit-bearing trees of all sorts. God saw that it was good.

God spoke: "Swarm, Ocean, with fish and all sea life! Birds, fly through the sky over Earth!" God created the huge whales, all the swarm of life in the waters, and every kind and species of flying birds. God saw that it was good. God blessed them: "Prosper! Reproduce! Fill Ocean! Birds reproduce on Earth!"

God spoke: "Let us make human beings in our image, make them reflecting our nature so they can be responsible for the fish in the sea, the birds in the air, the cattle, and yes Earth itself, and every animal that moves on the face of Earth."

God created human beings. He created them godlike, reflecting God's nature. He created them male and female. God blessed them.

"Prosper! Reproduce! Fill Earth! Take charge! Be responsible for fish in the sea and birds in the air, for every living thing that moves on the face of Earth."

## **Prayer**

Father, you made a world of diversity; people of many backgrounds, many races, speaking many languages, in many lands.

Just as you made us, so you made the creatures of the air, the land and the sea, in myriad forms, colours, habitats. We still don't know or understand the magnitude of your creations, the extent of this diversity, yet through our actions, accidental or deliberate, we seem bent on reducing it, with unknown consequences.

We pray that those in positions of influence and power may have the vision and courage to take vital environmental decisions.

Help us to cherish each thread that makes up the rich tapestry of our world, help us to marvel at biodiversity and to play our part in preserving it. Give us knowledge and wisdom and strength to keep the many facets of our world alive, a tribute to you.

Amen

### **Third hymn – No 245: It's a world of sunshine ...**

#### **Reading**

I'm going to continue our morning's readings with this summary of an article by Professor Stephen Blackmore, formerly Regius Keeper of the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh.

What is life? A web, a tree, or a jigsaw puzzle?

Each of these has been used as a way of expressing the remarkable diversity of living things that is the most distinctive feature of planet Earth.

Our planet is teeming with life. We share it with 1.7 million other species – each with particular distinctive characteristics and a distinctive way of live. These named species are just the tip of the iceberg!

Unlikely though it may seem – these are just our most obvious neighbours – the ones we bump into most often!

Far too many of them are now much rarer than before because the wild places they lived in are disappearing.

But there are a vast number still out there – between five and thirteen million species – somewhere in the world, awaiting discovery.

The idea of *life as a jigsaw puzzle* emphasizes each species as a part of nature and it can remind us that we are currently losing the pieces more quickly than we are putting together the picture of our planet.

*Life as a web* reminds us that no species is an island – each interacts with a host of others and

cannot continue without them.

*Life as a tree* reminds us that the species we share the planet with are the product of branching patterns of evolution that trace back over billions of years.

All these ideas can be expressed in one joyous word – biodiversity.

Let us celebrate what makes our planet special and commit ourselves to keeping it that way.

Humans are part of this biodiversity too and have the power to protect or destroy it. Currently our activities are destroying the biodiversity of the earth at alarming rates.

Data shows that humanity is demanding nature's resources and producing CO<sub>2</sub> at a rate that is 44% faster than what nature can regenerate and reabsorb. This means that currently, it takes 18 months for the earth to regenerate what we use in one year!

If everyone lived like an average European, it would require 2.5 planets to produce the resources we consume and absorb our CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

## **Fourth Hymn – No 244: Where are the voices for the Earth?**

### **Main talk**

I was walking up a steep ravine to look at a waterfall in Eskdale in Cumbria earlier in the year and I was struck by the abundance and variety of plants clinging to every nook and cranny of the walls of the ravine. There were ferns and mosses in great variety, there were celandines and violets and wood sorrel and wild raspberries, there were rhododendrons, birches, rowans and a host of other plants whose names I did not know.

When I visit my son in the Cape area of South Africa, there is a completely different flora, again one of great diversity. The Cape Flora is a Plant Kingdom in its own right and more plant species are crammed into that small area than in any other place on earth.

They are very different from the plants in Cumbria.

The fecundity of the earth is astonishing and we are only now beginning to realise how precious and unusual our planet is. It orbits the sun at a distance which enables it to retain its supply of water and its atmosphere. It has a moon of the right size to stabilise it. Along with our solar system, it was formed at a time when the elements necessary to enable the emergence of life had been formed and dispersed in the universe as a result of the explosions of older stars, supernovae. It has a geology that enables continual renewal of its mineral resources through the churning action of its tectonic plates. It is truly a precious place, very small and beautiful when seen from space.

Our current way of life is endangering its ability to support its diversity of life. Its plant life is vital.

Patrick Geddes, a distinguished botanist, said “By leaves we live. Every aspect of our

existence depends upon plants. We could not have evolved until plants had created the air we breathe. We must tend to the leaves.”

Photosynthesis powers our planet. Plankton in the oceans and forests on land are the most significant contributors. Quoting from Stephen Blackmore’s book *Gardening the Earth* – “What we must do above all else is keep our rich, biological inheritance. We need to inhabit a green, living world in which the global eco-system maintains its capacity to meet our needs and those of other living things. We need to think as gardeners do, taking a long term view, nurturing the earth and having a deep sense of connection with it.”

We need to act now, if we are to preserve the biodiversity of our earth, stabilise our carbon dioxide emissions and prevent runaway climate change with all the problems that would bring.

In Stephen Blackmore’s words:

“We must:

- ⤴ Protect our forests, the simplest and most effective step towards protecting the web of life
- ⤴ Nurture the soil
- ⤴ Plant the right bio-fuels in the right places
- ⤴ Invest in energy efficiency
- ⤴ Switch away from fossil fuels.”

We must learn again to become stewards of creation.

Amen

**Final hymn – No 138: Nourished by the rainfall, the Earth can come alive**

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### **Benediction**

Bless to us, O God,  
The moon that is above us  
The earth that is beneath us,  
The friends who are around us  
Your image deep within us.  
And let us go forth in your care.

**Sung triple Amen**