

CARLOPS PARISH CHURCH ECO SERVICE, 2011

LIGHT

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

Welcome

A candle sits burning on the communion table alongside two more candles, still unlit

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 an opportunity to present this eco-service.

Our service today is about light: physical light and spiritual light, and the role it plays in all our lives.

The service leader takes up the lit candle; a second person comes forward, takes another candle and lights it from the first; a third person takes up the third candle and lights it from the second. All three face the congregation with their lit candle.

Service leader

We hold these lights for the trinity of light and love and faith

Second person

We hold these lights in God's presence everywhere

Third person

We hold these lights for God's salvation for everyone

All three, together

We hold these lights for God's inspiration in all things

Second and third persons replace their lit candles on the communion table and sit down. Service leader continues with the service

First hymn – No 132: Immortal, invisible, God only wise ...

Prayer

Dear God

We thank you for your creation and we promise to do all we can to care for it properly and to persuade others to join us in this endeavour.

Please give us the strength, the wisdom and the knowledge to fulfil our promise, and the persistence to keep working at it when things become difficult.

And please forgive us the harm we do to your creation through our carelessness, our ignorance and our greed.

Today, we thank you especially for light. You created light to let us see, and to allow us to enjoy and marvel at this world of yours, with all its diversity of life, and shape, and colour. Make us grateful every morning when we open our eyes to discover wonders both familiar and new.

We also thank you for the inner light and understanding that enables us to know right from wrong. We ask you to help us keep our inner light focussed on what you would want us to do.

And we thank you too, for Jesus, who shows light to all the world, who shows us how to live our lives by his own matchless example, and who teaches us to pray ...

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

Now, we're going to talk to the young in years – and to the young at heart too!

Did you know that God positioned the earth at exactly the right distance from the sun for us to get just the amount of sunlight we need. Now, if we had been just a bit closer to the sun, like the planet Venus, we would get too much sunlight and burn up. Too far away and it would be like Mars, too cold for us to survive. So God made the earth in perfect balance with the sun. And – the sun gives us light.

Light: We can't do without light, we all need it

- ⤴ To see the beautiful things God has created
- ⤴ To give us heat and energy, (*demonstrate a solar torch or similar*)
- ⤴ To make plants grow so that- we have the food to eat AND to give us oxygen to breathe (*display a plant*)

We also use light in other ways

- ⤴ Lighthouses to help steer ships safely past dangerous rocks.
- ⤴ Sailors use the bright stars to navigate around the world.
- ⤴ God used a star to help the wise men find the baby Jesus.

But we humans have not cared for the earth God made, we have not kept it in perfect balance. We are now getting to the stage where we are getting too much sunlight. The ozone layer is getting thinner and thinner. It even has some holes in it! It's a worry, because the ozone layer protects us from some kinds of the sun's rays that can harm us.

I wear a magic beads bracelet to tell me when the sun is too hot. If I hold them in front of an artificial light, the beads stay the same colour, but if I let sunlight get at them, they'll change colour. The warmer the sun feels, the brighter they'll become. So when I see that they've changed from white to another colour, I know it's time to put sun-cream on to stop myself burning.

But remember, we are in God's reflective light. If you shone a torch into a long wide dark tunnel with nothing in it, you would see nothing. Light needs something to be reflected on. Like we need God's true light to reflect upon us, allowing God to show us what we are and the way to a happy life of caring and helping each other and our planet.

Offering

We will continue worshipping God with our offering

Prayer

Lord, we thank you for everything you have given us. Take our gifts and help us to use them wisely. Amen

Second (children's) hymn: Jesus bids us shine ...

Not in CH4, but Hymn No 488 in CH3; words follow below

Jesus bids us shine with a pure, clear light,
Like a little candle burning in the night.
In this world is darkness; so let us shine,
You in your small corner, and I in mine.

Jesus bids us shine, first of all for him,;
Well he sees and knows it, if our light grows dim;
He looks down from heaven to see us shine;
You in your small corner, and I in mine.

Jesus bids us shine, then, for all around;
Many kinds of darkness in the world are found –
Sin, and want and sorrow; so we must shine,
You in your small corner, and I in mine.

Children may go out at this point if desired

First reading: Genesis 1: 1-5

(King James version suggested because the words are so familiar)

We continue our readings with this poem by Trevor Barlow

The Light in the Darkness

In every one of us a Light burns
A Light that pushes us to be better than we are
A Light that pushes us towards perfection
The Light is the cause of happiness, love and bliss
The Light is only contrasted by the Darkness
A Darkness that resides within each of us
The Darkness brings us down
And it seeks to extinguish the Light
The Darkness causes hatred, envy and chaos
Where the Light is success, the Darkness is failure
Where the Light is freedom, the Darkness is imprisonment
Where the Light is satisfaction, the Darkness is remorse
Where the Light is forgiveness, the Darkness is blame
Where the Light is good, the Darkness is evil
Where the Light is God, the darkness is Satan
And where the Light is serenity, the Darkness is frustration
And inside each of us the battle between Light and Darkness rages
Everything in life breathes both the Light and the Dark
Every action and every reaction in life is ruled by this clash
Every injustice and every act of morality
Every feeling of guilt and every sense of forgiveness
Both the Light and Darkness reside in each of us

Please God, let us always choose light

Third hymn – No 448 : Lord, the light of your love is shining ...

Final reading: Gospel according to St John: 1: 1-9

(We used the Remix Bible because we found the wording stark and powerful; the text from the Remix Bible follows below)

The Word was first,
The Word present to God
God present to the Word
The Word was God
in readiness for God from day one.

Everything was created through him,
nothing- not one thing! –
came into being without him.
What came into existence was Life
and the Light was Life to live by.
The Life-light blazed out of the darkness:
The darkness couldn't put it out

There once was a man, his name John, sent by God to point out the way to the Life-Light. He came to show everyone where to look, who to believe in. John was not himself the Light, he was there to show the way to the Light.

The Life-Light was the real thing.
Every person entering Life – He brings into Light

Prayer: The Light of the World

Almighty God who are the light of the world
Grant us your heavenly blessing
May the radiance of your light
Illuminate our hearts and
Brighten our hope
With the spirit of faith and love
Let the light of your presence guide us
For in your light do we see light
Bless us also with the spirit
That happiness and peace may ever abide in our hearts for ever

Amen

Fourth hymn – No 601: Look upon us blessed Lord ...

Main talk: Light

Our service today is about light. But what *is* light? And what does light mean to us?

I'd like to share some reflections about light, and how we think about it, and how it influences us. Let's think about light as a scientific concept, and as a metaphor. And let's ponder why a particular kind of light is important for us and for the way we live our lives.

First, the science – only a little – I promise!

What *is* light? Go to a physics text book or to the internet and you'll find a definition which says something like:

Light is electromagnetic radiation which has a wave length in a range that is detectable by the human eye.

So, we can see things that lights meets as it travels.

The definition might go on to say that ...

... the amplitude of the light wave – its relative height, if you like – (*make arm movements to illustrate*) determines the brightness of the light; and the length of the wave – the distance between the wave tops (*make arm movements to illustrate*) – determines its colour.

You may be relieved to hear that that last bit is more science than we need today!

But let's take just one more step in the science – and this one is important. That electromagnetic radiation must come from somewhere – it must emanate from a source. So – light is the product of some power; light is energy.

Now, we won't go any further into the physics of any of that; because we don't need to for today's purpose – and because I can't do it anyway!

So please – let me ask you to take these three core concepts at face value and hold them in your mind

1. Light comes from a source.
2. Light is energy.
3. Light enables us to see.

Well – that has used up what I know about the physics of light! But we've also covered nearly all that we really need to know about light to help us in a Christian sense.

Light has a source; light is energy; and light enables us to see.

Think about it – no light; no sight. No light – and the sense that many of us would say is the most important of our five senses is set at nought. Human beings don't see well in the dark, so – no light; no sight.

There may be many sources of light – we've seen that already in today's service. A match; a candle; a torch; the sun. What we call natural light and what we call artificial light. But they are all light. Many sources – but just one light.

We've also seen that one light source doesn't affect the other. The second candle that we lit didn't dim the first. But on the other hand, any attempt to hide or shield light, impairs it,

reduces its effectiveness – and may even extinguish it (*actions to illustrate, using the candles lit at start of service; place a sheet of dark-coloured paper or card in front of one candle, to hide its light; reveal it again; then use a candle-snuffer to extinguish it*).

Let's leave the science for now, and let's think about light in the metaphorical sense.

In everyday speech and thought, we use the word “light” to represent many feelings and senses – always positive ones. Light means welcome, happy, good, comforting, cheering, encouraging, helping, straightforward, reliable.

Think of some of the phrases we use:

- ⤴ The light of my life
- ⤴ The light of the world
- ⤴ She's a leading light in the group
- ⤴ Shedding light on something – explaining it
- ⤴ Now I see the light – I understand
- ⤴ Light at the end of the tunnel – hope; or, success is near

And in a different use of the word “Many hands make light work”. It's no coincidence that “light” means “easy” as well as “sight-enabling electromagnetic radiation and energy”.

These are all positive concepts; light concepts.

And contrariwise, we use the lack of light, or darkness, to stand for the opposite to all of these. No light means threatening, dangerous, unpleasant, uncaring, difficult, unhappy, evil.

- ⤴ You're in my light – you're making things difficult for me; you're hindering me
- ⤴ I can't see the light – I don't understand
- ⤴ It's a dark day – bad, sad things have happened today

And as the contrast to the other sense of “light!”; “This is heavy going” – it's difficult, or unpleasant, or boring

So, where have we got to so far, and where does it lead us next?

Light is energy. Light has a source. We need light to see.

That's the science.

Light is good. Light brings understanding. Light helps people. Light enhances life.

Those are the metaphors.

The metaphors tell us that light is more than a phenomenon in physics. It's also a personal, inner quality; an inner energy; a force for good. It sits inside us and drives us in the right direction, helps us do the right thing, helps us do well; helps us care. If we take the trouble to try!

But remember the science too: light has a source. So what might be the source of inner light? Well – let's ask ourselves another question – What is the source of the moral compass we all carry? It's God – isn't it?

God tells us what is right, and what is wrong – and then of course, we choose and we act – sometimes correctly, sometimes not – but always knowingly.

And God gives us inner light – the capacity to do good, to understand, to be compassionate, to help; to make the right kind of difference; and in doing so, to be happy.

So let us seek out our inner light, and nurture it, and use it for a better world.

Remember

Light has a source, no matter what kind. Physical light has a source – the sun, a candle a bulb; our inner light has its source too – in God.

No light – no sight

No inner light – no understanding, no compassion, no Christian effort

So let us remember the physics and the metaphors of light, and let us use our light, for good.

Final hymn – No 225: Summer suns are glowing, over land and sea ...

Benediction

May the blessing of the Lord be upon us. From our eyes, may the light shine brightly so that in the darkness we may see the needs of others and respond.

Sung triple Amen