

BEES

Carlops Parish Church Eco Service, 2013

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

Welcome

We'd like to welcome you to our service this morning.

2013 is the Year of Natural Scotland, but we have not chosen one of the “Big Five”, such as the red squirrel or the red deer as our theme for this morning. Instead we are thinking about something small – the bee – an insect that has a huge impact on our lives.

The Roman poet Virgil called bees “the battery of orchards and fields” and urged us to care for them. This morning we invite you to think about the way we do, or don't care for our planet and the impact that will have on the life of bees.

First Hymn – 240: God in such love for us gave us this planet ...

Prayer

Let us pray a rainbow prayer ...

Creator God, how deep are your designs! You made a living earth, cloud rain and wind, and charged us with their care.

We confess that the way we live today is changing the climate, the seas and the balance of life, dispossessing the poor and future generations.

Build our lives into an ark for all creation, and, as you promised Noah never to repeat the Flood, so make us heralds of a new rainbow covenant: choosing life for all that is at risk – for creation, for neighbours near and far, for our children and for ourselves.

Amen

A poem of praise

Two voices will deliver this praise to God, taken from the Wild Goose “Wee Worship Book”. The congregation is invited to join with the second voice. The response is “Great is your name. Great is your love.”

O God, you summon the day to dawn
You teach the morning to water the earth
 Great is your name
 Great is your love
For you the valleys shall sing for joy
The trees of the field shall clap their hands

Great is your name
Great is your love
For you the monarchs of the earth shall bow
The poor and the persecuted shall shout for joy
Great is your name
Great is your love
Your love and mercy shall last for ever
Fresh as the morning, sure as the sunrise
Great is your name
Great is your love.

Amen

Second Hymn – No 147: All creatures of our God and King ...
(omit verses 5 and 6)

For the children – Tomato sauce

The presenter needs some props, as clarified by the text

Today we are thinking about bees. They are vital to us because they pollinate many of our important food crops, as well as providing us with honey.

Can you see what I have here? Yes, it is a tin Heinz beans! Recently I heard someone say that every time we open a tin of beans we should remember bees – and I wondered why.

What link could there be between the contents of this tin – and bees? Well, here's a clue – a bottle of tomato sauce. Yes, the link is tomatoes. We like tomato sauce with our beans, on our pizzas and with our chips. And tomato plants need bees for pollination so that they can produce a good crop.

Bees need lots of nectar and pollen to feed themselves and to raise their young. That means they need to visit lots of flowers – wild in fields, hedgerows and woods, or cultivated in our gardens and farms. When a bee clambers inside a flower to collect nectar a yellow powder called pollen gets disturbed and some attaches itself to the bee. When pollen is moved around in one flower or carried to another, that flower is fertilised and can then make fruit and seeds! Those seeds have everything they need to make new plants; and of course, the fruits are what we eat!

Bees and other insects help many plants produce the food we need to keep us alive and healthy – including most of the fruit we like to eat, some of the nuts, many of our vegetables and of course, tomatoes. We'd be very hungry without them, because one of every three bites of food we eat depends on pollination.

Without bees it isn't just honey we'd miss. Imagine if one day when you sit down to breakfast your Mum tells you – there's no jam for your toast! You can't even have a juicy apple. And horror of horrors – you may never eat chocolate again. How scary would that be? Your Mum then explains that many of the bees and other insects are sick or have disappeared, and they are the ones which help plants produce our food.

It is true that bees are having a bad time but there are still many around. Firstly, they need light and warmth to give them energy to go collecting nectar, so cold wet weather can force them to go hungry.

On sunny days they need to visit lots of flowers to collect enough nectar to feed their young and to store food for winter. And at the same time they distribute the pollen.

But there aren't nearly so many wild flowers growing in the fields, hedgerows and woods as there used to be, so what we do in our gardens is very important – planting bee friendly flowers and providing places where they can shelter safely during the winter. They can be sick of a virus just as you or I can, and it is possible that some of the chemicals we use on our field crops and in our gardens have a bad effect on them.

We can't change the weather but we can help in other ways. You can help by learning about the life of bees, by telling others about the importance of pollination, by planting flowers that bees and butterflies like, and by persuading people to take better care of our world.

God gave Creation for all his creatures. He expects us to take care, not just of each other, but of all the creatures which help make the world a wonderful place. Today we think of how much we owe to the bees and must think about what we can do to help them. No matter how small our effort it can make a difference. And all our little differences put together can make a big difference. If the bees are healthy and working together we will have enough to eat and be healthy too.

This poem gives us something to think about

I will not hurry through this day. Lord, I will listen by the way
To humming bees and singing birds, to rustling trees and friendly words;
I will look up into the sky where fleecy clouds and swallows fly.
I will not hurry through this day. I will take time to think and pray.

Prayer

Heavenly Father please help us to take time to think about the world around us and to do what we can to make it a place where all the different peoples and species of wildlife can share resources and live in peace together.

Amen

Offering

Prayer

We ask for your blessing on our offering. Let it be used wisely and according to your will.

Amen

Third hymn – No 245: It's a world of sunshine, it's a world of rain ...

Readings

Psalm 8: The Lord's glory and man's dignity

O Lord our sovereign, how glorious is thy name in all the earth!

Thy majesty is praised high as the heavens.

Out of the mouths of babes, of infants at the breast, thou hast rebuked the mighty, silencing enmity and vengeance to teach thy foes a lesson.

When I look up at the heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and stars set in their place by thee, what is man that thou shouldst remember him, mortal man that thou shouldst care for him?

Yet thou hast made him little less than a god, crowning him with glory and honour.

Thou makest him master over all thy creatures: thou hast put everything under his feet:

all sheep and oxen, all the wild beasts, the birds in the air and the fish in the sea, and all that moves along the paths of ocean.

O Lord our sovereign, how glorious is thy name in all the earth.

The following reading is entitled "We Believe"

We believe in God the Creator,
who reminds us in the dawning rays of every new day
that new life is possible.

We believe in the wonder and grandeur of the universe
where the whole of life is called to live in a harmony of care.

This we believe

We believe in Jesus Christ
Who prayed in mountains of peace
and brought us the word
in mustard trees of faith and fig trees of blessing,
whose footsteps touched the earth in love and who invites us to follow.

This we believe

We believe in the Holy Spirit,
whose wisdom often lies
embedded in ancient peoples.
They trod lightly across deserts and
lived gently among plants and creatures.
They reached respectfully for the mystery,
Which is God-with-us, the One who never leaves us nor forsakes us.

This we believe

We believe in everlasting hope,
the great calling of the people of God, the church,
for the transforming of all things, which is possible in God.

This we believe.

Amen

Fourth hymn – No 244: Where are the voices for the earth ...

Prayers

This prayer is in the form of a poem by Carol Ann Duffy

Bless air's gift of sweetness, honey from the bees,
Inspired by clover, marigold, eucalyptus, thyme,
the hundred perfumes of the wind.

Bless the beekeeper.

For bees make gardens grow, where beelines end,
sighing in roses, saffron blooms, buddleia;
where bees pray on their knees,
sing, praise in pear trees, plum trees;
bees are the batteries of orchards, gardens, guard them.

We ask O Lord for your blessing on the work of bees.

Now, let us offer our prayer of intercession

Loving God, we hold in your healing presence our world, praying that we may learn to live in harmony with our fellow creatures, nurturing them as we do ourselves.

Loving God, we hold in your healing presence the troubled parts of our world, praying for understanding, reconciliation, peace.

Loving God, we hold in your healing presence our own church and community, praying that our lives may reflect your light in the world.

Loving God, we hold in your healing presence all those known to us who are ill or in any other trouble, praying that they may know your presence with them.

Now we say together the prayer that Jesus taught us

Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.
Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil
for thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory for ever.

Amen

Fifth hymn – No 238: Lord, bring the day to pass when forest, rock and hill ...

Principal address

Let us think about what can the bees teach us ...

With the children we were thinking about the importance of bees to our existence and we touched on what we can do to help keep them healthy and productive. All in our own interests! But what can we learn from bees, about how we live together and support each other?

The Bible tells us, in the Book of Psalms, that while God created the earth, he has delegated its care to the human race.

Psalm 24: 1

The world and all that is in it belongs to the Lord: the earth and all who live on it are his.

Psalm 115: 16

Heaven belongs to the lord alone, but he gave the earth to the human race.

These verses may seem to contradict each other, but think of it this way. The earth and everything on it and in it belongs to God by creation, and to us by delegation. So, he has given us the responsibility to preserve and develop the earth on his behalf. He has given us *dominion*, which implies governance and care in ruling; not *domination*, which implies exploitation.

Our challenge is to nurture that which has been delegated, mindful of the needs of all His creatures and of our future generations.

So what might we learn from the bees?

They fulfil their role in nature by taking what they need for survival, putting something in store for hard times, but doing nothing to excess. Pollination, which they do inadvertently, benefits the rest of nature. Would that what we do inadvertently should be so positive.

Bees live and work in a structured community. The current and future welfare of the hive depends on each bee fulfilling its role efficiently – all have gifts with which to serve. In the hive, queens, workers and drones have clearly defined roles. Studies support the hypothesis that they are content to fill their assigned role and don't waste time and energy squabbling about their status.

Contrast that with the politicking and jockeying for position frequently evident in the human workplace and in other parts of our lives. Aggressive pursuit of our own interests can be highly counter-productive and ugly to watch; anyone who has watched *The Apprentice* on TV can vouch for that. But it isn't the aggressive pursuit that is damaging – after all that's what bees do. But they do it in pursuit of long-term survival the whole community, not the special short-term interest of any individual or group.

Our food supplies depend on bees for pollination. Bees give a service to plants in return for a benefit from those plants. Benefits to humans are an inadvertent outcome of that interaction.

But, our dominion on the planet is such that bees depend on us to maintain a safe and healthy environment for them – locally, nationally and internationally.

Human beings are in a unique position, having the analytical capacity, imagination and skill to give something back to the bees, and to nature overall. This is a God-given gift and consequently a God-given responsibility in our lives. Clearly we are designed for interdependence, but observing our society, we know that it's hard not to slip into selfishness and attempted domination.

God has created us agents with free will to choose what we do and how we do it. Are we giving and taking on a fair basis? Are we co-operating for the long term welfare of this world? Is the problem so big we don't know where to start? But remember – deep down, we do know what is the right thing to do. But then ... we choose. And too often, we don't choose well.

Between us, we have gifts to teach, to manage our fields, forests and gardens with the welfare of bees in mind, and we can do our homework so that we understand the complexity of the problem. Based on that learning, we can work at persuading government, industries, academics and our neighbours to co-operate for the long-term good of this earth. In these ways we can fulfil the challenge God has laid upon us – to nurture the earth mindful of the needs of all His creatures and of our future generations.

Amen

Closing hymn – No 149: Let all creation dance ...

Blessing

May God who established the dance of creation,
Who marvelled at the lilies of the field
Who transforms chaos to order,
Lead us to transform our lives and our Church
To reflect God's glory in creation.

Triple amen

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