

Carlops Parish Church Eco-service, 2023

HONOURING THE SEASON OF CREATION

Welcome and lighting of candle

Reading Genesis 1: 27-31a

So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.'

Then God said, 'I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground – everything that has the breath of life in it – I give every green plant for food.' And it was so.

God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.

Collect (from Psalm 81)

Sing aloud to God our strength:
Shout for joy to the God of Jacob.
Raise a song, sound the tambourine, the sweet lyre with the harp.
Blow the trumpet at the new moon.

First Hymn CH122; Let all the world in every corner sing ...

Let all the world in every corner sing,
'My God and King!'
The heavens are not too high,
his praise may thither fly;
the earth is not too low,
his praises there may grow.
Let all the world in every corner sing,
'My God and King!'

Let all the world in every corner sing,
'My God and King!'
The church with psalms must shout,
no door can keep them out;
but, above all, the heart

must bear the longest part.
Let all the world in every corner sing,
'My God and King!'

Prayer of Approach

Introduction to the Season of Creation

What the Church of Scotland and Eco-congregation Scotland expect of members in Eco matters

Today is the last Sunday in the Church of Scotland's Season of Creation, also called Creation Time and Creation-tide. This period which ends on St Francis Day: October 4th. The Season of Creation was adopted by our Church of Scotland in 1989 and has a wider context than our long-standing Harvest Festival thanksgiving, addressing worldwide issues such as injustice, and environmental change, and our duties to care for the world, including our fellow creatures with whom we share so much.

We have won three awards: Bronze, Silver and Gold hanging on our wall here – given by Eco-congregation Scotland for our care of God's creation. How did they come to their judgement? They asked to be satisfied about our behaviour as a congregation in four different areas of environmental activity.

Firstly, how we check and register all we do already to care for our planet and recognize where we are weak and could do more. That we have drawn up a feasible Action Plan, agreed with the Kirk Session, engaged a range of willing people in the congregation to initiate Eco activities and sustain and co-ordinate participants – making regular checks on how things are going. Communicate Eco event progress regularly via newsletters, notice boards, websites etc. Keep everything monitored and updated.

Secondly (Spiritual Living) The ECO team need to help the whole congregation to make the link between these activities and their Christian faith through regular discussions with and reports to the Kirk Session and at AGMs. Prayers for others should often include ill or needy people as well as relevant national and wider world issues such as national disasters, contacts abroad – like our friends in Malawi. All members of the church need to be aware of our international and national concerns.

Thirdly Practical Living is something that all members of the Congregation need to be aware of and address in their own lives, as well as in caring for the buildings and grounds of the church. They need to address issues like using clean energy in their own houses, encouraging biodiversity in their gardens, reducing energy consumption and waste. Recycling, litter picks, reuse of containers, reduction of energy use and travel in individual vehicles and use of Eco products all also come into this section and are vigorously pursued by many congregations.

The *fourth* and final section, Global Living, where we are asked to have a positive impact on/work with national and global environmental justice concerns. We are asked to become aware of local and national eco concerns through church notices, newsletters, meetings,

posters etc. Some churches are very good at regularly conveying information to their congregation about problems of national and international disasters, through notice boards, regular Newsletters, local newspaper articles and websites. We are also asked to consider Global and international concerns on climate change. Many churches include international issues in their prayers. Many churches have partnered with churches abroad eg Africa – like our link through Mary’s Meals with Malawi – and some forge links with parliamentary representatives. This is the area which needs most development, if we are to meet the expectations of the Church of Scotland and Eco-congregation Scotland– especially in the areas of climate change, refugees and justice!

May God help us to address these matters and meet the expectations of our church!

Second Hymn CH 238; Lord, bring the day to pass ...

Lord, bring the day to pass
when forest, rock, and hill,
the beasts, the birds, the grass,
will know your finished will:
when we attain our destiny
and nature lives in harmony.

Forgive our careless use
of water, ore, and soil –
the plenty we abuse
supplied by others’ toil:
save us from making self our creed,
turn us towards each other’s need.

Help us, when we release
creation’s secret powers,
to harness them for peace,
our children’s peace, and ours:
teach us the art of mastering
in servant form, like Christ our King.

Creation groans, travails,
futile its present plight,
bound – till the hour it hails
God’s children born of light:
that we may gain our true estate,
come, Lord, new heavens and earth create.

Reading Matthew 21:23-32

Jesus entered the temple courts, and, while he was teaching, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him.

‘By what authority are you doing these things?’ they asked. ‘And who gave you this authority?’ Jesus replied, ‘I will also ask you one question. If you answer me, I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. John’s baptism – where did it come from? Was it from heaven, or of human origin?’

They discussed it among themselves and said, ‘If we say, “From heaven”, he will ask, “Then why didn’t you believe him?” But if we say, “Of human origin”– we are afraid of the people, for they all hold that John was a prophet.’ So they answered Jesus, ‘We don’t know.’ Then he said, ‘Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.

‘What do you think? There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said, “Son, go and work today in the vineyard.” “I will not,” he answered, but later he changed his mind and went. Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, “I will, sir,” but he did not go. Which of the two did what his father wanted?’ ‘The first,’ they answered. Jesus said to them, ‘Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him.’

Reflection

First voice: sub title

Jesus, in our reading, had been teaching in the temple as he had been accustomed to do, and his message had not found favour with the regular Jewish chief priests and elders who identified it as both threatening and subversive. The priests challenged Jesus’s authority, but quickly realized that they could not better him in argument. They understood that both John the Baptist and Jesus had a message about how to live, a message of love that threatened to undercut the priests’ own authority and regulations. Jesus had been debating with priests in Jewish temples since he was 12. We do not know what he had been speaking of that enraged the priests: perhaps the Good Samaritan, where priests do not show up very well, or the Prodigal Son, where the loving father shows only love, no recriminations to the wayward, but truly repentant, profligate child.

We are very good at responding to sufferers from natural disasters like the floods earthquakes, or to sufferers from invasions – such as refugees arising from Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. But we tend to be more reticent to take to the streets in demonstrations against government decisions that affect climate change badly, desperate refugees arriving in small boats, or the treatment of a high proportion of women as second class citizens in many parts of the world. We seem to think that, since we elected politicians to represent us then we should leave them to make judgements on our behalf unquestioned. But they are there to represent us and need to be regularly informed of our views: eg the recent decision to slow down the programme to replace pollution vehicles. Energy security is not guaranteed by renewed and additional investment in what absolutely and morally needs to end. Some people do take political action and write in protest to their MPs about the treatment of refugees, or are brave enough to protest publicly against the use and proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Second voice: Environment, nuclear issues and climate change

No-one should be in any doubt that we are facing a climate and biodiversity crisis which, together, pose genuine existential threats to humanity. Yet we cannot wait for governments to act. While they may occasionally make the right noises, manifesto commitments around the environment are not yet a core vote winner. We have seen this week [*beginning 25 September 2023*] how the UK government has completely rolled back on its green policies. What example does this set to the young who are the ones who will outlive us and have to deal with the broken world?

I have been a member of Scottish CND since I was a teenager, believing passionately that the world must get rid of these obscene weapons. We all know the devastating impact of Hiroshima, but we have our own sites at Faslane and Coulport, only a short distance from our biggest city, Glasgow. The destruction would be wide-spread. But were you aware that the US has delivered new fighter jets to Lakenheath in Suffolk and other European NATO bases. These jets are able to launch satellite guided nuclear bombs, the most dangerous weapons in the nuclear arsenal as they are small and targeted. In reality, the radioactive fallout means that they are totally indiscriminate, killing and poisoning people for miles around.

Militarism fuels the Climate Crisis

- Did you know that Military emissions are exempt from global mandatory reporting and reduction targets?
- Global military carbon emissions account for 5.5% of total global emissions, exceeding the value of civilian aviation
- The UK spends over 7 times more on its military than on reaching the Net Zero targets.

92 countries have now signed the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. This is good progress for a treaty that was only adopted six years ago. In Carllops, we have been part of the national bell-ringing marking our support.

What can we do? Join Scottish CND. Write to your MP. Stand with “Women in Black” every Saturday 1-2 in Edinburgh. Come to the Festival of Survival in Glasgow on 4th November [THE FESTIVAL FOR SURVIVAL](#), where we will be discussing ideas to save the world.

Dedication of Offering

Prayer for others

Let us pray.

Our God, we come humbly before you this morning, grateful for all our comforts and mindful of our privileges relative to many people in the world. We pray that we can use our position to help others.

We come now to pray for every person, wherever they are. We marvel that you will hear our prayers, inward and outward, at this time and always. Please guide us to bear out these prayers for others in our actions.

We pray for nature, for those highlighting what we are losing, for those striving to protect ecosystems and endangered species. We pray for those who are preparing communities for the effects of climate change. Lord, we pray that individuals will do the right thing when making choices about travel and energy. We pray that people everywhere will take their environmental responsibilities to heart and act, and we pray that churches can be a part of encouraging that.

Lord, we bring the UK Government before you for prayer. Please guide them to enable a kinder country and a better approach to environmental policies. God we pray for every person in politics, let them see the need before them and concentrate money and efforts in a compassionate direction.

Lord, as the dark nights approach, we ask that we will be mindful of those who may not feel able to go out as much. Help us to be aware of those who may appreciate a visit or a call. Lord we pray for areas of conflict and tension around the world. We pray for all those organisations shielding women and children from violence in these areas or providing safe passage. We pray for the men thrown into fighting, for their families who have had to leave them behind. We pray for all displaced from Nagorno-Karabakh and bring all displaced peoples before you. We pray especially for our Ukrainian and Syrian communities here in Scotland, may they feel at home despite their circumstances.

Lord, we pray for all people whose lives are touched by drug abuse or other addictions. Help those who provide their care to be good role models. Lord we pray for the stigma of addiction to become a thing of the past so that people who are recovering can find their way to employment and stability.

We pray for any trafficked person, for their rescue and healing and contact with their family and friends. We pray that trafficking gangs will be stopped in these activities and that drivers and businesses complicit in this will be exposed.

We pray for those living in states with corrupt leaders, coercive policies and social instability.

We pray for the children in these places. We pray for those imprisoned for their opposition, and we pray for change and an end to fear.

We pray also for children who are in danger at home. Lord we ask for alertness from neighbours and the authorities and for investment in the care sector. We ask for good people to come forward to foster and adopt and provide safe homes.

In a moment of silence, we pray for those people and matters on our own minds.

We pray for ourselves, that we will be dedicated servants. We pray for the mindset and the means to put others first. We pray for blessings on our community, and we ask for our friendships to deepen and so strengthen our support for each other.

When we hear of people suffering in so many ways across the world, we ask that we do not hang our heads in despair, but instead act. Lord we appeal to you now, you who cleared the temple in anger and rebuked the authorities so many times, that we will take courage from your example and seek out injustices in the world that we can help to change; that we will

support efforts to feed the hungry, and the work to shelter and care for the homeless and forgotten people across our planet. Even if it means getting angry first.

You accepted every sort of person. Help us to find ways to break down barriers and speed equality here and abroad.

Our God, in closing we pray that the words we have heard and sung today will sit with us, remind us why we come here and inspire us for the days ahead.

We ask all these things in your name, amen.

Third Hymn CH 622; We sing a love ...

We sing a love that sets all people free,
that blows like wind, that burns like scorching flame,
enfolds like earth, springs up like water clear:
come, living love, live in our hearts today.

We sing a love that seeks another's good,
that longs to serve and not to count the cost,
a love that, yielding, finds itself made new:
come, caring love, live in our hearts today.

We sing a love, unflinching, unafraid
to be itself, despite another's wrath,
a love that stands alone and undismayed:
come, strengthening love, live in our hearts today.

We sing a love, that, wandering, will not rest
until it finds its way, its home, its source,
through joy and sadness pressing on refreshed:
come pilgrim love, live in our hearts today.

We seek a burning, fiery Holy Ghost
that seeks out shades of ancient bitterness,
transfiguring these, as Christ in every heart:
come joyful love, live in our hearts today.

Benediction (with Threefold Amen)

Fourth Hymn CH 786; May the God of peace ...

May the God of peace go with us
as we travel from this place;
may the love of Jesus keep us
firm in hope, and full of grace.

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