

North West Wiltshire Pastorate

Service for Sunday October 17th 2021 – *Climate Change & Action.*

Welcome and Opening words

Good morning and welcome to worship today, our service for Climate Action.

We come together, having walked or driven to this place. Perhaps it was a rush –

perhaps there was time aplenty – maybe a prayer was said on the journey, maybe the prayer was kept for this time?

Perhaps minds were cleared, perhaps minds are frantically busy; however you came, whatever you have brought with you. You are here. We are here, together and we worship God.

Hymn – R&S 42 For the fruits of all creation (Tune: Ar hyd y nos)

[Click here for video.](#)

Opening Prayer

Our opening prayer comes from the Jewish tradition.

Let us pray,

How wonderful, O Lord, are the works of your hands!

the heavens declare your glory;

the arch of sky displays your handiwork.

In your love you have given us the power to behold the beauty of your world, robed in all its splendour.

The sun and the stars,

the valleys and hills,

the rivers and lakes all disclose your presence.

The roaring breakers of the sea tell of your awesome might,

the beasts of the field and the birds of the air speak of your wondrous will.

In your goodness you have made us able to hear the music of the world.

You are in our midst.

A divine voice sings through all creation.

Amen.

Introduction

One of the most interesting people I have a ‘social media relationship’ with is Tom Holland, the historian, not the actor who plays Spiderman! As this service has been whirling around my already overstuffed mind this week, I saw a photo he’d posted with an ironic caption of “that’s Christmas sorted.” It was a packet of action figure-type toys and the title was Godzilla verses Jesus ... so no prizes for guessing who the action figures were meant to represent.

It made me think –

A representation of a species long extinct against the figure of the one who came and died in place of the world, whose people still gather to worship in his name as we are doing today.

But more than that, perhaps, in an unexpected way but nonetheless, still important, yet another example of how time is not on our side in the whole issue of trying to reverse the ever-increasing effects of climate change.

The theme for this year's season of creation is 'A home for all? Renewing the Oikos of God' Oikos being the greek word for home and household. By rooting ourselves in Oikos we affirm our integral web of relationship that sustains not just humanity's well-being but that of the earth.

So with those initial thoughts let us turn to our readings for today.

Readings: Joel, chapter 2 verses 21-27 & Matthew, chapter 6, verses 25-33

Prayer of Confession

Creator God,
we are your handiwork, charged to reflect your glory,
we represent your creative genius,
varied, colourful, intricately woven –
with all that makes us unique,
with gossamer bonds that holds and break,
sometimes stretched, often frayed.

We confess that in our pursuit of what we believe we need,
our stewardship of your creation has not been what it should have,
financial gain has won out over sustainability,
accumulation over sufficiency,
upgrading to the latest model – just because we can.

On this day, as we consider the effects our actions have,
locally, nationally, globally –
on this day, when we hold that alongside all we have from you,
all that sustains us and nurtures us and encourages us;
it shows us, as a mirror
the lack of consideration we have shown,
to our brothers and sisters,
to our world.

Help us to be content with sufficient,
help us to live seasonally and sustainably;
forgive us for seeing only our small piece of the jigsaw
not the whole picture.
Forgive us and renew us.
Amen.

Reflection

WWJD – we all know what those letters mean.

What about WWGD – any ideas? Just a hint, the G does not mean God!

The G here means Greta, it was only when I caught part of her recent speech at a global Youth Climate summit that I realised how quiet she'd been during the pandemic and I'd missed her popping up on my screens. Who can forget the fabulous side-eye she gave Donald Trump as he walked past her at the UN in New York? And this time it was our Prime Minister in the firing line ... "There is no plan B" she stated, continuing "There is no planet B, no planet blah blah ..." to expected applause.

As I watched parts of the conference what struck me was the eagerness of certain world leaders to be seen to be sending a message but more than that, it was the reasoned and measured nature of the debate, coming just before our party conference season, I have to say it made a refreshing change.

We have just finished the season of creation and we are looking forward to COP26, we are responding to the request for changes to hold a Climate Change service, joining with Christians all over the world but that world is on the brink. It is currently trying to find its way against a backdrop of anxiety, fear, rising prices, shortages and a lack of time.

The season of Creation has, in many ways replaced a traditional Harvest time for the church and there will be those who miss that date in the church year, a service to give thanks for the bounty of the land and those who work it; the land that provides us with so much.

But a land that has been plundered, a land not given time to renew itself as demand has increased; those who work the land, always used to hard work, are now leaving because it can no longer pay them enough so they can survive; so their families can live and flourish and our reliance on foods produced overseas is having an almost irreversible impact on the planet in terms of the global footprint such journeys leave. So we have to change, not in the future, but now.

In August the UN Secretary General, in reply to the latest report published on Climate Change talked about a 'code red for humanity' further continuing to say that if we act now, we can make a difference. In reply to that Dr. James Dyke, the author of *Fire, Storm and Flood* puts it more starkly, "Where we go next as humanity is up to us and completely dependent on what we do now."

Our OT reading is a part of a comment by Joel, as to his expectations of the coming of the Messiah, seeing it as a time when Israel's disobedience will be put right, not only in terms of the relationship between God and His people but by putting right the land and all that is in it.

Humanity's plunder and mis-treatment is nothing new, but it has gone unchallenged for too long.

Our gospel sees Jesus instructing those listening to turn from an inward perspective to one which focuses on God's priorities, seeing the Kingdom not as centuries of Church doctrine has made it, stiff, abstract but something broad, organic, inclusive and abundant that is allowed to evolve and be shaped by experience.

Much of the conversation is being led by those much younger than us; you may argue they have a greater stake in what happens next but I would counter that by saying they have greater knowledge because they have grown up with this, the choices we are now making are a way of life for them – look up the Young Christian Climate Network, see what is happening and become a part of it; not the conversation, that time has passed, be a part of what makes the difference. As one person put it, "Draw Creation – not as it is now but as what it was intended to be."

The final word goes to Hannah Malcolm, one of the organisers of the Young Christian Climate Network's pilgrimage to Glasgow for COP26. She said "I'm waiting for the pilgrim's arrival in the North East, where we'll tread ancient pilgrim paths. As we walk the same ground as St. Bede, St. Cuthbert and St. Aiden, we'll seek, like them, to witness to God's love for all his creatures ... in this pilgrimage our hope is that many will join us in our witness to climate justice, redirecting our attention to those people and places who so easily go unheard."

Amen.

Music – to consider our response to what we have heard

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MsHJHmpAn8Y>

Prayers of Intercession and The Lord's Prayer

Let us pray

The young and the young at heart,
the enthusiastic and the enabler;
the committed and the cautious;
we all have a part to play,
to change minds,
to change attitudes,
to change behaviours.

We all have a responsibility,
to each other,
to our planet,
to the God of Creation.

We pray for all involved in COP26;
those who work behind the scenes,
organising, shaping potential policy,
negotiating and networking in advance.
And for those attending,
for the promises they will make – and need to keep.
for the example they set,
for the inspiration they need,
for ears to listen to lived experience.

We pray for those who follow us,
whose arguments of urgency owe as much to
the science as much as to passion;
as much as from fear as to hope,
thinking especially of the Young Christian Climate Network,
committed to living out faith in the pursuit of climate justice,
making a pilgrimage,
making their actions speak louder than words,

making a difference for all generations right now.

We pray for all currently working on
vital climate financial negotiations,
trying to change the minds of those who hold power
both political and financial,
looking to the long-term, not short-term gain.

Finally, we pray for ourselves,
that what we have heard inspires us all to action,
playing our part,
hearing truth and accepting it,
speaking truth to power,
sharing truth to and for our world.
We bring all our prayers together, saying Our Father ...

Hymn – R&S 85 God in his love for us lent us this planet (Tune: Epiphany hymn)

[Click here for video](#)

Final thoughts and Blessing

So we draw our thoughts to an end; but we do not leave them here.
They go with us, wherever that leads,
As we go, we think of what we know we need to do –
And from Iona, a blessing in the Celtic tradition;
May God's goodness be yours,
And well, and seven times well, may you spend your lives:
May you be an isle in the sea,
May you be a hill on the shore,
May you be a star in the darkness,
May you be a staff to the weak;
May the love Christ Jesus gave fill every heart for you;
May the love Christ Jesus gave fill you for every one.
Amen.