

Whose world is it anyway? – Service outline

SERVICE ORDER & CHILDREN'S TALK

As traditions differ so greatly, this is not intended as a fixed 'Order of Service' but more of a menu from which worship leaders or ministers can pick items that they know are suitable for their situation. Do choose mainly hymns and songs that people already know ... but maybe think of introducing one or two newer ones. If you normally pray liturgically, do use the material below – but do feel free to use your own ideas and extemporise!

An Environment Sunday is also a good opportunity for all age worship. Where possible include children in the activities, except perhaps for the sermon itself, where they can either have a separate children's talk, or do activities linked to the theme.

SERVICE AIM: To understand that the earth is God's not ours, but is entrusted to our care.

PREPARATION:

- Get one or more people to take photographs of your local environment for use in section 1 (their garden, allotments, fields, streets, canal, trees, flowers, wildlife). You could include the children's groups in this if they have access to digital cameras.
- Get a large sheet, and clay for the children's activity (section 3), and prepare a large picture of planet earth (children's groups could help with this).

1. Welcome:

'The earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world and all who live in it'. *Psalm 24.1*

In order to set the scene for the theme of Environment Sunday, it would be fitting for the Church to be decorated with flowers, branches, and if possible banners on a creation theme.

If equipment allows, you could have music playing (Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony, Vivaldi's Four Seasons, Brian Doerksen's 'Creation Calls' for example), and have photographs of your local environment shown on a large screen. It would be best if these photographs concentrate on the natural environment (in a city this can include parks, window boxes, canals), showing both the beauty and also the way our environment is spoilt and degraded through waste, destruction and neglect.

2. Opening Song / Hymn:

From the highest of heights (Indescribable) by Chris Tomlin *or* For the Beauty of the Earth

3. Activity / Children's Talk:

This can take place either at this point or later in the service – perhaps as a children's activity whilst the adult sermon is taking place.

At the front of the church have a large sheet of blank paper (at least 6' by 4') or an old bed sheet. Alongside it have a tray of clay or mud (or even thick brown water-soluble paint). This can either be a simple mix of soil and water, or can be pottery clay (available from www.homecrafts.co.uk or www.potclays.co.uk – Code 1124 Buff School Clay is very suitable). On the other side of the sheet have some basins of clean water and towels.

Now get children to come up and make hand prints on the sheet, by pressing their palms first into the clay / mud. You will need assistance to help them, including with washing afterwards!

Whilst the children (and maybe some adults) are doing this, explain the theme for today, and explain the link between the name Adam and the Hebrew meaning of his name - mud / clay / dust – reminding us that we are all part of God's earth. Also bring in the idea that Jesus became 'clay' like us – calling himself 'Son of Man' or 'Son of the one made from clay'. If a reading is required at this stage then



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Matthew 9.1-8 'The Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.' (v.6) can be used, with explanation that it needed a perfect Son of Man to live and die and rise again, in order to forgive sins and heal the effects of all that had gone wrong starting with Adam – the first Son of Man. If desired, this can be made into a traditional 'three point talk:

- a. Jesus part of creation – fully human, like us; Son of Man / Son of the soil / closeness to the earth
- b. Jesus, Lord of creation (heals the paralysed man; stills the storm, creator & saviour; servant King)
- c. Jesus wants us to be ... part of creation, friends of creation; servants and Lords within creation

Conclude by either sticking a large picture of a globe in the middle of the sheet (ideally you should have marked out this area so you aren't hiding somebody's hand print!), and / or by adding the words "The earth is the Lord's and everything in it" – written in a bright colour on paper. If you are doing this activity during the adult talk and therefore have more time, you could have some children making the globe and the text, and perhaps even adding drawn animals whilst others are doing handprints.

4. Time of Praise & Worship:

If possible sing several songs together at this point.

- Who paints the skies
- Let everything that has breath praise the Lord (Redman)
- Over all the earth, you reign on high (Lord, reign in me – Brenton Brown)

A more traditional alternative would be: O Lord my God (How great Thou art)

6. Reading: Psalm 24.1-2 & Romans 8.18-25

This is the most suitable passage in relation to the sermon.

If a Gospel reading is required, then use Matthew 9.1-8 (see above for children's talk / activity).

7. Sermon:

See notes & PowerPoint slides for 'Whose world is it anyway?' sermon

8. Prayer of Confession:

The response is "**Create us anew**" – said by the leader, and repeated by the congregation.

God of Justice we acknowledge our guilt in response to the care of creation. We have abused, over-used and abandoned those good things that you have created. You made a perfect world yet under our care, beauty and goodness have been lost and the world is being destroyed. Father we ask for forgiveness ... **Create us anew**

God of Creation, you entrusted us with dominion and responsibility for this earth - a gift in trust to be used responsibly. Yet we have used creation for our own selfish gain. We don't recycle enough; we don't re-use when we could; we don't often restore, but simply replace. Father we ask for forgiveness ... **Create us anew**

God of the Nations, you commanded us to be fruitful and multiply but through our sinfulness we have overpopulated the earth and failed to create a sustainable future. Father we have failed to protect the vulnerable peoples of this world. Instead we exploit their labour and their lands. Father we ask for forgiveness ... **Create us anew**

God of Eternity, we thank you for the hope that comes through Jesus. Give us a vision for our planet and motivate us to act today. Enable us to capture your hope as we care for your creation, and wait in eager anticipation of its final restoration. God of creation may your kingdom come **Amen.**



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9. Absolution:

May the God of grace,
who loves all that he has made,
and in Christ welcomes home all who come to him,
heal your brokenness,
forgive you your sins
and return you to a life of justice, mercy and simplicity.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

10. Song / Hymn of Response:

- 'God in his love for us lent us this planet' (Fred Pratt Green) *or*
- 'I the Lord of sea and sky' (Daniel Schutte)

11. Prayers:

These can either be traditional intercessions, or something more interactive, especially if children are in the service at this point. If the latter, use the following litany, which is to be chanted together by everybody, perhaps with younger children keeping a rhythm on percussion instruments.

Jesus, Lord of the Earth
By you all things were created

All creeping things, all flying things,
All living things, all dying things,
The highest hills, the deepest seas,
The strongest gale, the slightest breeze,
The blossom on a cherry tree,
A spinning spider's artistry,
The smell of dry earth after rain,
Each cell within a human brain,
Each fallen leaf, each towering pine,
Reveals your intricate design.
Creator Lord, we stand amazed,
And for your earth, we give you praise:

Jesus, Lord of the Earth
By you all things were created

Jesus, Lord of the Earth
For you all things were created

The smoothest pebble on the shore,
Detritus on the forest floor,
The undiscovered depths of space,
The wrinkles on a baby's face;
Each sparrow and each human hair
Is numbered and is in your care,
All iron and oil and diamonds too,
Whilst used by us, belong to you,
Forgive us Lord, for we forget,
All things are yours, and yet,
Provider Lord, we stand amazed,
And with your earth, we give you praise:

Jesus, Lord of the Earth



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For you all things were created

Jesus, Lord of the Earth
In you all things hold together

All of earth's greatest mysteries,
And all our personal histories,
Each planet and each grain of sand,
You hold them in your nail-scarred hands,
You feed the birds and clothe the flowers,
You warm the soil and send the showers,
You sound the rhythms of the earth,
Of tides and seasons, death and birth,
It is for you creation sings,
The head, the centre of all things,
Sustainer Lord, we stand amazed,
And with your earth, we give you praise:

Jesus, Lord of the Earth
In you all things hold together

Jesus, Lord of the earth
In you all things are made new

Lord God before all time began,
Yet you became a Son of Man,
You stepped into the world you made,
A world once good, now spoilt, decayed,
As Son of Man your death reversed
The chaos of creation's curse,
The earth itself quaked on that day,
Released from bondage to decay,
All things are reconciled to you,
Creation's hope is born anew.
Redeemer Lord, we stand amazed
And with your earth, we give you praise.

Jesus, Lord of the earth
In you all things are made new

c. Dave Bookless, 2004

Prayer of Intercession:

Father, we thank you that you are the Creator of the world, and you sustain it by your power. We recognise that Climate Change is damaging the ecosystems of the world, and we pray for your wisdom for all who are seeking to reduce climate change through the reduction of CO2 emissions. We pray for the work of all those organisations that are seeking to bring pressure to bear on governments, to set and work for targets to reduce emissions, and we ask that their voice may be heeded.

Father, we remember the teaching of St Paul that in this present world the creation is in bondage to decay. We remember too, that it is your purpose in Christ to reconcile all things to yourself, and restore them. We pray that as we enjoy the fruits of that reconciliation in our lives and the new life that your Spirit brings, so we may allow the Spirit to transform our attitudes to both other people and your creation, and that in loving obedience to you we may work for the good of all.

Father, we pray for all who have made the 'Living Lightly 24-1' lifestyle commitment, asking that you will give them the faith to persevere in that choice, and take regular steps to adapt their lifestyle to it.



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We pray that all of us may allow you to transform our thinking, as your Spirit renews our minds, and that we may be prepared to make changes in our lifestyles.

Father, we bring before you in our prayers areas of the world that suffer particular environmental problems, including flooding, storms, drought, and uncertain weather patterns. We remember especially areas which are already feeling the impacts of climate change - such as Bangladesh, southern China, Pacific islands, many parts of Africa, and even some areas of our own country. We remember how in the days of Noah and the flood you gave the rainbow as a sign of your care for the earth and those who live in it. We pray for your blessing on those who work to alleviate the impacts of climate change, wherever they are found, and to provide for those made destitute in poor countries.

Father, we thank you for your promise that one day there will be a new heaven and a new earth in which your Son will reign in righteousness, where sorrow and suffering will be no more, and your people will be one in Him. We pray that we may so live in this life, trusting in your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ, and allowing His Spirit to transform our lives, that we may not be ashamed when we come at last to share with Him in the fullness of his eternal kingdom.

12. Communion:

If following the Church of England order, use Prayer G, which contains the words: "From the beginning you have created all things, and all your works echo the silent music of your praise ...". Alternatively, use another prayer with the following Proper Preface.

Proper Preface (based on Colossians 1)

And now we give you thanks because
by Christ your Son you have created all things,
In Christ our Lord all things now hold together,
And through the blood of Christ shed on the cross,
You have reconciled to yourself all things on earth and in heaven.
We are your new creations in Christ,
First-fruits of the healing of creation,
Stewards of the earth, and servants of the King
Therefore with angels and archangels ...

Breaking of the Bread

Blessed are you, King of the universe.
You have given us this bread and this wine,
Fruit of the earth, and work of human hands.
May they be to us the body and blood of Christ.
May they speak to us of your provision in creation,
And of your transforming work in making all things new.

Words of Distribution

With the bread:
Christ's body, broken for you and for a broken world.

With the cup:

Christ's blood, shed for you, and shed for the world.

Post Communion

Lord of all,
as we have received the bread and wine,
Fruits of the earth and tokens of salvation,
So with joy we celebrate your goodness
And commit ourselves to serve you in your world,
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



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13. Blessing:

Lord God, Father of Creation,
You made all that exists from nothing:
Spoke into existence each bird and tree,
Designed the detail of each butterfly and flower,
Made us from dust, one part of your world.

Lord God, Saviour of the World,
You made your covenant with all living creatures:
Watch when a sparrow falls to the ground,
Sustain all creation by your word,
Send your Son to bring healing to creation.

Lord God, Spirit of Life,
You breathe your image into human beings;
Inspire us with love for your world,
Charge us to care for all you have made,
Invite us to steward and care for your world.

Blessed God, Father, Son, Spirit.
We praise you for all you have created.
Forgive us for taking your works for granted.
Equip us with vision and ability to fulfil our task:
To act justly, live simply and walk humbly with you, our God,
In the garden of your Creation,

Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

14. Final Song / Hymn:

Either 'Jesus is Lord, Creation's voice proclaims it' or 'Light of the World, you stepped down into darkness' (Tim Hughes).

