



Introduction

Scarcely a day seems to go by now without some aspect of climate change making the headlines in our news. Despite denial and resistance in some quarters to the phenomenon, the overwhelming scientific consensus identifies it as a, perhaps *the* crisis facing our planet, made more poignant still, given that it results from accumulated human factors.

If creation care has for too long been a neglected aspect of our Christian faith, surely now there is a fresh urgency to address this as creatively as possible. This is a new era of repentance and transformation, one in which Jesus' great command to 'love God and neighbour as you love yourself' asks us to faithfully extend that to love of our 'neighbourhood', each local patch as well the entire earth.

Creation Sunday 2021

One specific way in which PCI can address this issue is to have a worship service on the theme of climate change. We therefore ask, even urge you to hold a Creation Sunday Service at a time that suits your congregation. You may wish to tie it in with your Harvest Thanksgiving service, since the themes are deeply entwined, or you may choose to keep those services distinct. We hope to encourage three things in relation to a new awareness of our ecological responsibilities as Christians:

1. **Worship** – hold a Creation Sunday Service
2. **Commit** – see the 10 Practical Steps. There are lots of ways in which we can and should change our lifestyles.
3. **Speak Up** – engage local and national governments about the necessary legislative changes required to mitigate or adapt to our ecological crisis.

Biblical and Theological Contribution

The prophetic challenge recorded in the Old Testament has the twin aspects of God's hard challenge, including warning, crisis and judgement but also of divine promise, the hope that people can be part of the process towards positive change when aligned with the Lord's will and open to the Spirit. Those two foci of challenge and promise, or otherwise stated, crisis and opportunity, are calling out to us as the contemporary church in a new millennium that is transitioning from one geological era, the 'Holocene' of comparatively stable and benign climate enjoyed by human civilisation, to the 'Anthropocene', so called because human behaviour has cumulatively brought about greater climate instability and biodiversity degradation especially through our use of fossil fuels.

The church's calling comes from God in Christ by the Spirit. Sometimes that calling warrants us making common cause with other communities when a crisis or emergency threatens across society at a particular time, or the planet in an entire era. Climate change is our generation's great issue, yet whatever commonalities of action such a crisis may evoke from us across society or planet, we as church, as disciples of Jesus Christ can contribute something that is distinct: the revelation and inspiration of the Holy Scriptures and the theological and ethical insights that they give rise to in our search to fulfil our vocation with creative fidelity and loving care.

The following biblical texts are just some of the many that inform our perspective on God's good, beloved yet beleaguered creation. A thread running throughout many of them is that creation justice, social justice and human righteousness are all interwoven to our weal or woe.

Biblical Texts

Genesis 1-2

Job 38-41

Psalms 8, 19, 65, 104, 146

Isaiah 1, 5, 11, 24, 35, 55, 65:17-25

Jeremiah 14:1-9; 17:5-13

Joel

Matthew 6:25-34

Romans 8:18-25

Revelation 21-22

Praise

These hymns may be of use to you for a Creation Sunday worship service.

Irish Presbyterian Hymnal

5 Morning has broken

17 All creatures of our God and King

35 Think of a world without any flowers

39 Sing praise to God on mountain tops

110 All the ends of the earth

541 I, the lord of sea and sky

628 Beauty for brokenness

From the album *Doxecology* by Resound Worship – www.resoundworship.org

If the Fields are Parched by Chris Juby (YouTube – 4:26)

God the Maker of the Heavens by Sam Hargreaves (YouTube – 4:50)

Heaven's Voice Brings the Dawn by Joel Payne and Matt Weeks (YouTube 4:35)

Hear the Song of Our Lament by Keiko Ying (YouTube 3:52)

Prayers

The following prayers may be use of use for a Creation Sunday service:

(1) Living God, Creating Spirit, as the hosts of heaven sing with angelic voice, so we, the creatures of your beloved creation, sing your praises too. You are the Source of all that is: calling being out of nothing; shaping order out of chaos; making this marvellous web of worldwide life that even the most up-to-date science can only faintly comprehend. For millennia now, this has been our earthly home – terra firma: stable enough to ground us safely; provision enough to meet our daily needs; and more than enough beauty to stir our souls and delight our senses. Such abundant blessing goes far beyond any notion of earning and deserving, for all this is your free gift: bounty that showers upon us from your generous heart, your outstretched arms, your open hands. And yet, all this splendour so often meets with a paltry, pitiful response. Instead of wonder and awe, we remain locked up in our narrow concerns. Instead of respect and care, we pull and plunder, we tear asunder, the delicate weave, the very fabric of life. Instead of the will to appreciate and reciprocate your Holy Spirit at work in the world, ours, we confess, is an alien agenda, doing largely as please, without heed to the dire depletion of our planet's resources, the exhaustion of ecosystems, the suffocation of the earth. Dear God, open our eyes to see how we are despoiling your glory; open our ears to hear your necessary truth; open our hearts to receive that forgiveness which your Son has granted, and that renewal which your Spirit still empowers, so that even at this late hour, we may return to our senses, and respect this world, our beloved home, as a place of blessed shalom. Amen.

(2) Eternal God, Living Presence, as we think of the world in all its splendour, we thank you, Lord, and praise your holy name. This beloved world, this good creation, is an unfolding mystery, in which much seems to stay the same, and yet, as we look deeper, truth be told, there is constant flux and perennial change. The rhythms of year, month and day are woven into nature's calendar; the span of weeks, hours and minutes demonstrate our marking of the passage of time. By your will, we human beings have found a place in your plans, the work of creation enfolding us too, into a myriad of rich relationships, in which climate systems and ecosystems, interact in ways that fill us with wonder when we pause, just long enough to ponder and pray. Yet the further we look, and the more we learn, we discern that we are not just gifted by you, but also, held to account by you, for in your plans for this planet, unless we work together with

respect and restraint, we are endangering this cherished earth. Inspire us, O God, to live like Christ, whose work of creation culminates in reconciliation, not by violent means or devious schemes, but a love prepared to go to the cross. Inspire us, O God, to live like Jesus, centred on you but open to others; living so light upon the earth that neither material possessions nor unhealthy obsessions can drive a wedge between him and you. Inspire us, O God, to live like Jesus, an ethos of sharing, in which all your creatures, no matter how seemingly inconsequential, are deemed worthy of love, and are handled with tender care. Inspire us, O God, to live like Christ, taking the time to listen to each other, learning to wait upon each other, and, when the moment is right, saying the good word, doing the appropriate deed, simply being with each other come what may till your kingdom come, and your new creation be present among us. Amen.

Other resources, including relevant videos are available at:

www.climatesunday.org

www.ecocongregationireland.com

<https://operationnoah.org/>