

**St Andrew's and St George's West**  
**September 13, 2020**

**The Dream of the Earth**



We have forgotten how to be good guests,  
how to walk lightly on the Earth as its other creatures do.

Barbara Ward, *Only One Earth*, 1972

the **Welcome**

**Call to Worship**

Eco-congregation Scotland

Creation eagerly yearns for the Day of the Lord  
when the sea will part again,  
the mountains skip like rams  
and the hills like young sheep.

Come, like the earth tremble at the presence of the Lord in this place;  
come to the one who drew forth water from the rock,  
who turned flint into a flowing stream.

Come and hear truth – strange speech for our age –  
come and be transformed. Come.

**Hymn 5 O Lord, our Lord, throughout the earth**

O Lord, our Lord, throughout the earth  
how glorious is your name,  
and glorious too where unseen heavens  
your majesty proclaim.

On infant lips, in children's song  
a strong defence you raise  
to counter enemy and threat,  
and foil the rebel's ways.

When I look up and see the stars  
which your own fingers made,  
and wonder at the moon and stars,  
each perfectly displayed;  
then I must ask, 'Why do you care?  
Why love humanity?  
And why keep every mortal name  
fixed in your memory?'

Yet such as us you made and meant  
just less than gods to be;  
with honour and with glory, Lord,  
you crowned humanity.  
And then dominion you bestowed  
for all made by your hand,  
all sheep and cattle, birds and fish  
that move through sea or land.

*Coda:*

O Lord, our Lord, throughout the earth  
how glorious is your name!

John L. Bell (*b. 1949*)

## **Opening Prayer**

*from Seasons of the Spirit (adapted)*

O God of freedom

You led your people of old with cloud by day and fire by night.  
You parted the sea with your breath, and saved Your people from oppression.  
Free us, O God, from  
...indifference in the face of poverty,  
...ignorance in the face of fact,  
...disbelief in the face of evidence before our very eyes,  
Deliver us, that we may allow the earth to heal.

When we deny the science of climate change, enlighten us.  
When we continue to pollute our earth, convict us.  
When we exploit Creation, correct us.  
When we fail to cherish the Earth, our fragile home, change us.  
When we fail to love the poor and oppressed, forgive us.  
Give us time, O God, to change, to turn away from destruction and back to you.

God is the fount of all mercy, and through the life, death, and new life of Jesus has shown us how to live, calling us to renewed action and commitment.  
Through the ministry of the Church may you receive pardon, peace, and wisdom, that you may use your time well, be filled with grace, and help to renew the earth.

## *Prayer of confession*

In the presence of God, present with us, wherever we are, we gather:  
We come with the land: from mountain heights to time-worn valleys,  
from barren deserts to fertile plains, as those who draw life from God.

We lift our voice with the voice of the land: seeking from God what makes for life, crying out for the violence that has been done, longing and working for creation's redemption. We listen with the land for vibrations of God's presence, grounding all in the deep assurance that God is and will be in this place, in our place, in all places.

*(silence)*

What does God hear when listening to the land?

I am land, crying out, soiled by pollution.

I am land, crying out, stained by the shedding of blood.

**What have we done to the land,**

**O God, what have we done to you?**

I am land, crying out, torn apart by hatreds.

I am land, crying out, used up and discarded without thought for the future.

**What have we done to the land,**

**O God, what have we done to you?**

What do we hear when listening to the land?

**We hear land, crying out for peace, crying out for justice,  
crying out for healing.**

*Words of affirmation*

God hears the cry of land – and God hears the cries we raise.

Let us cry out for an end to the violence: done to the earth, done to one another.

Let us cry out, and let us work for, a renewed commitment to Earth's healing.

**God forgive us...**

**God empower us...**

**God help us...**

**for the sake of the land. Amen.**

**Old Testament Reading**

**Psalm 8**

*from Iona Abbey Worship Book*

Wonderful God, creator,  
The whole earth declares your greatness.

Your glory glows in the heavens.  
It is babbled by babies and sung by children.

You are safe from all your enemies:  
those who oppose you are silenced.

When I look at the sky which you have made,  
the moon and the stars that you set in place:

Where do human beings fit in the pattern?  
What are we that you care for us?

You have made us only a little lower than yourself;  
and crowned us with glory and honour.

You share with us the responsibility  
to care for the sheep and the cattle, wild things, birds and fish,  
everything that lies in the sea;

to work with you within creation.

Wonderful God, creator,  
The whole earth declares your greatness.

**Hymn 97 O God, you search me and you know me** (*vv 1 & 2*)

O God, you search me and you know me.  
All my thoughts lie open to your gaze.  
When I walk or lie down you are before me:  
ever the maker and keeper of my days.

You know my resting and my rising.  
You discern my purpose from afar,  
and with love everlasting you besiege me:  
in every moment of life or death, you are.

**Story Dinosaurs and All that Rubbish**

**Reflection 1 The dream of the earth**

**Hymn 97 O God, you search me and you know me** (*vv3, 4 & 5*)

Before a word is on my tongue, Lord,  
you have known its meaning through and through.  
You are with me beyond my understanding:  
God of my present, my past and future too.

Although your Spirit is upon me,  
still I search for shelter from your light.  
There is nowhere on earth I can escape you:  
even the darkness is radiant in your sight.

For you created me and shaped me,  
gave me life within my mother's womb.  
For the wonder of who I am, I praise you:  
safe in your hands, all creation is made new.

Bernadette Farrell (*b. 1957*)

**New Testament Reading Matthew 18: 21 - 34 (NRSV)**

*Forgiveness*

Then Peter came and said to him, "Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?" Jesus said to him, "Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.

*The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant*

"For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand

talents was brought to him; and, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made. So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.'

And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat, he said, 'Pay what you owe.' Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt. When his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. Then his lord summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?' And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt.

## **Reflection 2 The dream of forgiveness**

**Anthem Think of how God loves you.** James MacMillan (*b.1959*)

### **Prayers of the People**

*from Seasons of the Spirit (adapted)*

We come to this time of prayer as those who live in memory and hope of the story of creation, where God draws us up from the soil into life. With that memory in mind, we come now to pray to the God who works re-creation and redemption from the ground up. And so let us pray:

Hear our prayers, O God, for all grieved by death – whether a loved one held dear or strangers we have never met who have perished in conflicts or natural disasters or from the pandemic of Covid-19.

We pray for comfort and strength as remains are returned to the earth in hopes that life will be drawn up from the earth as you have in Christ.

Hear our prayers, O God, for all who wander across many lands in search of home. For refugees fleeing war or famine; for the homeless, cast off by the loss of a job, or struggles with mental illness.

May our prayers for such ones be joined in commitment to minister to and with them.

Hear our prayers, O God, for all who work to protect Earth against the ravages of natural disaster, or greed-driven indifference, or acts of violence in warfare without regard for what becomes of the Earth beneath the weapons, the destruction and the toxic chemicals. Stir in us a willingness to speak and act beyond the safety of study groups for the sake of your good creation.

Hear our prayers, O God, for the faithfulness of the church. For the church, too, is caretaker of the land we hold – even as we are called to be harbingers of the land and realm you promise.

May our practices of, and relationships with the land, as individuals and congregations, be in keeping with the values of your commonwealth.

Hear our prayer, O God, for eyes and spirits open to your presence – especially in the places where we may feel you distant or removed, even in the places where we might try to flee from you. Even in those shadowed lands, you accompany us upon the way.

You bring healing. You wait upon us. You love us with a love that will not let us go.  
Amen

### **The Peace**

In these times we are not able to physically share The Peace, but we can say together,  
The Universal Prayer For Peace

**Lead me from death to life, from falsehood to truth,  
Lead me from despair to hope, from fear to trust,  
Lead me from hate to love, from war to peace,  
Let peace fill our lives, our world, our universe.  
Peace, Salaam, Shalom**

### **Hymn 798 The peace of the earth be with you**

The peace of the earth be with you,  
the peace of the heavens too;  
the peace of the rivers be with you,  
the peace of the oceans too.  
Deep peace falling over you;  
God's peace growing in you.

Guatemalan text, *translated* Christine Carson

### **Blessing**

As we prepare to go onward  
and embrace the challenges  
of our lives and our world,  
let us ask for God's blessing.

May God bless us with strength to seek justice.  
May God bless us with wisdom to care for our earth.  
May God bless us with love to bring forth new life.  
In the name of God, the maker and sustainer of the whole world,  
of Jesus, our new covenant,  
and of the Holy Spirit, who opens eyes and hearts. Amen.

### **Sung Blessing The Lord bless you and keep you**

The Lord bless you and keep you.  
The Lord make his face to shine upon you  
and be gracious unto you.  
The Lord lift up his countenance upon you  
and give you peace.

Minister: Rosie Magee  
Leaders: Judy and Arthur Chapman  
Reader: Cathie Donaldson  
Prayers of the people: Danni Smith  
Director of Music: Brigitte Harris  
The Choir of St Andrew's and St George's West

Vocal ensemble: Eleanor Wilson, Eleanor Cozens, Caitlin McGillivray, Drew Crichton,  
Andrew Carvel

Soloists: Frances Cooper and Eleanor Cozens

Introductory music: Drew Crichton *plays* Song without words No 48 by Felix Mendelssohn

Closing music: Brigitte Harris *plays* Farewell to Stromness by Peter Maxwell Davies

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