

Service led by the Eco group on Sunday August 23 in the churchyard

Chris

Let us give thanks

Lord we give thanks for this time together now, for the experience of worship and praise

outside surrounded by the trees and sounds of nature, able to feel and breathe the air around us.

- The earth and all that is in it is a gift from God, we are called to care and to protect the earth it is our home.

- Many of us have remained at home during this time of lockdown, staying put, staying safe, unable to go out or see anyone, it may have felt stressful. Jesus experienced a time on his own, apart from everyone when he went for 40 days into the desert, into the wilderness.

Mark 1:12-13 NIV

At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness, and he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.

- Lockdown may have felt as if each one of us were in our own wilderness. Perhaps feeling worried and fearful, having to find a new way of doing things, but we have learnt to adapt, as we have today with our outdoor worship. Who would have thought that we would be doing this at the beginning of the year.

We have found comfort in our relationships with others too, valuing the love of family and friends even when living alone. Finding new ways to make contact with each other. How many of us thought when this began that many of us would be using zoom, looking at each other on a screen.

Our home became our place of worship, with God alongside us, some of us had time to rest and listen.

To listen to his word to slow down, listen to the sounds of nature in our gardens as the roads became quieter and on our walks. We discovered local green spaces, places many just a few steps away from our homes that we had never visited. We became aware of nature around us and how it helps us when we are anxious or worried, while also helping to keep us fit while walking. A time of isolation and being in a wilderness can bring change, new life, new beginnings, a revival.

- Having time to think, observing how the virus was changing the world, the crisis facing us all we may have come to think more about our earth and the problems of climate change. To learn about the effects on the world and to our own lives now and in the future. Everyday there has been news in the media of how covid has affected people all around the world. We have become aware of its effects on each country.

Although we do not respond in the same way to climate change, it is the same, its effects are felt by us all wherever we are.

So it is a time to ask ourselves how as Christians do we want to be seen in our response to this.

The church, all of us can take a lead and be an example by looking at how we live. We can

make changes no matter how small, it all helps, to live lightly and be seen to be caring for creation.

Each one of us is responsible for our actions, the things we do each day, how we shop, the way we work and choose to travel.

We have been fortunate we have had food and a roof over our head, even in lockdown we have had all we needed to live. Do we need more, more things to clutter our earth? Carbon emissions need to be lower, we need to save energy, and water, to use less plastic and eat less meat.

It may seem difficult change can be difficult. It may feel like yet another thing to have to manage when we are trying to just get by, but God is with us, he is alongside us, with us wherever we are. We can trust and listen to him to help us.

We have the love of each other to support us, family and friends to support us, as we change our habits to find new ways of living. We can learn together, pray together for the world, to share the earth's resources and to bring peace and justice to people in the world.

So we can learn about the changes we need to make, listen for guidance when we pray and give thanks for the love of God.

Let's give thanks for the beauty and complexity of the earth and all creation.

A Prayer of commitment

Let us ask the God of creation to pour his love upon us as we commit ourselves to care for God's creation.

Upon the rich earth send a blessing, O Lord.

Let the earth be fruitful and creation's treasures holy.

Inspire us to love your world and all its people.

Upon the produce of the earth send a blessing, O Lord.

Guide us into a sustainable future and give us the will to share the produce of the world.

Upon the seas and waters send a blessing, O Lord.

Teach us to cherish the water of the earth, to help preserve the purity of rivers, lakes and seas.

Where the earth is parched and the well has run dry; where war brings want, and children go

hungry; where the poor cry out for bread and for justice, give us caring, healing hands.

Compel us to be generous with our talents and our time.

For the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

Conclusions

A reminder of part of Psalm 8

- ⁴ what is mankind that you are mindful of them,
human beings that you care for them?
⁵ You have made them a little lower than the angels
and crowned them with glory and honor.
⁶ You made them rulers over the works of your hands;
you put everything under their feet:
⁷ all flocks and herds,
and the animals of the wild,
⁸ the birds in the sky,
and the fish in the sea,
all that swim the paths of the seas.
⁹ LORD, our Lord,
how majestic is your name in all the earth

How can **we** help God's creation to continue in the future – A creation for our children and our grandchildren to enjoy?

As Chris said – The church, all of us, can be an example by looking at how **we** live and make changes no matter how small, to live lightly and be seen to be caring for creation.

Three words stood out for me from Chris's talk earlier

LISTEN LEARN LOVE

Over the past months

- We have all been much more able to have time to appreciate God's creation, above us and all around us, and to LISTEN to the sounds of nature in our gardens and on our walks.
- We have LEARNT about the harmful effects that lock down has had on the environment and how nature has flourished with less harmful emissions. We can LEARN together about the changes we need to make to our own lives.

- There have been overwhelming acts of love and caring in our communities. We have the LOVE of each other and of family and friends to support us as we change our habits to find new ways of living and most importantly, we have the LOVE of God.

Let's think particularly about our place in God's creation as we say the Lord's **The Lord's prayer** together

Our final hymn is "Father I place into your hands the things I cannot do" – because God IS alongside us, with us wherever we are. We can always trust and listen to him to help us.

Blessing

May God the Holy Spirit, who hovered over the waters of creation and formed the world from chaos, form us in the likeness of Christ and renew the face of the earth. Amen.