



Welcome

Welcome to our service today. I am delighted to welcome the Chair of the Yorkshire West Methodist District, Rev Kerry Tankard, to share in our service on the theme from the Methodist Way of Life, "We will care for creation and all God's gifts." We will hear from Kerry in a little while.

If you have been using our Live Lent booklets or taking part in a Lent group this week you may have been thinking about your story of faith and how your story fits into the big story of God's love for this world shown through the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. I wonder if you have been able to identify any steps that have formed your journey and written your story? Maybe, as we continue with our service today you could reflect a little more on that.

Many people encounter something of God's story either through the Body of Christ – the Church, or through the glory of the world in which we live. Today, we acknowledge that there is brokenness in both. We have placed at the foot of our Lent Cross some bread and wine to remind us of how Jesus' body was broken for us and how it is often through our own brokenness that other people come to see something of God at work in us. But we also acknowledge that there is brokenness in our world and that we have contributed to that. So, as we worship together maybe you could identify some small actions or commitments that can help mend this broken world or help to share your story of God's love with others.

As we share in our Lent liturgy please join in the words on the screen.

Lent Liturgy

We are not the first to make the journey to Jerusalem; many have gone before us and many will come after us. From near and far, God's people gathered to celebrate God's goodness on the holy mountain.

We are pilgrims on a journey. We are travellers on the road.

Jesus often went to Jerusalem as a child to celebrate Passover. Now he has set his face toward Jerusalem again, knowing this time will be different. Jesus' last journey to Jerusalem is sombre. He has no illusions about what is to come. Still, he goes ahead, doing God's will.

We are pilgrims on a journey. We are travellers on the road.

Let us pray. God of light, we want to follow in Jesus' footsteps, but we have our fears and doubts. We would rather avoid the pain and darkness on our journey. Give us courage and perseverance when the journey is difficult and the grace to help others on the road. In the name of Jesus we pray, Amen.

We sing together, "Sent by the Lord am I."

Song

Sent by the Lord am I;
My hands are ready now
To make the earth the place
In which the kingdom comes.
Sent by the Lord am I;
My hands are ready now
To make the earth the place
In which the kingdom comes.

*The angels cannot change
A world of hurt and pain
Into a world of love,
Of justice and of peace.
The task is mine to do,
To set it really free.
Oh, help me to obey;
Help me to do your will.ⁱ*

Prayers

Our prayers today are taken from this year's Methodist Prayer Handbook, titled, "The earth is the Lord's". Let us pray:

Creator God, we marvel at the details of your handiwork: petals and spiders' webs and tiny grains of sand. Perfect and accurate in microscopic beauty, precision tooling by your almighty hand. We thank you and praise you for the colours of creation: infinite variety of pigment and of shade. Genius at work in the brushstrokes of nature, fingerprint of glory in the landscape you have made. Lord, we breathe your essence in the fragrance of the flowers: priceless perfumes gift-wrapped by you. Help us to appreciate and care for your creation so that future generations experience it anew.ⁱⁱ

Loving God, in the beginning you created all things, and pronounced them good. You gave human beings dominion over every living creature and the marvellous privilege of being custodians of the earth.

But we have abused the trust you graciously placed in us. We have ravaged and spoiled your creation through our avarice and self-centredness and we are truly sorry.

Forgive us through the merits of your Son, Jesus Christ, through whom you have reconciled all things to yourself. And as all creation groans, aching for freedom, we thank you for the glorious biblical vision of a new heaven and a new earth.

Through your Spirit, help us to rejoice in this hope, and work tirelessly towards this end. Amen.ⁱⁱⁱ

Hymn

O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder
Consider all the works thy hand hath made,
I see the stars, I hear the mighty thunder,
Thy power throughout the universe displayed:

*Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to thee:
How great thou art, how great thou art!
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to thee:
How great thou art, how great thou art!*

When through the woods and forest glades I wander
And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees;
When I look down from lofty mountain grandeur,
And hear the brook, and feel the gentle breeze:

Then sings my soul...

And when I think that God, his Son not sparing,
Sent him to die, I scarce can take it in
That on the cross, my burden gladly bearing,
He bled and died to take away my sin:

Then sings my soul...

When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation
And take me home – what joy shall fill my heart;
Then shall I bow in humble adoration,
And there proclaim: my God, how great thou art:

The sings my soul...^{iv}

Reading

And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind." And it was so. God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.

Then God said, "Let us make humankind^[c] in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."

So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." God said, "See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation. (Gen. 1: 24 – 2: 3)

Reflection

Rev Kerry Tankard: "We will care for creation and all God's gifts"

The videos can be viewed at www.burleymethodist.org

Alternatively, the written text is provided below

Song

I love You Lord
Oh Your mercy never fails me
All my days
I've been held in Your hands
From the moment that I wake up
Until I lay my head
I will sing of the goodness of God

*All my life You have been faithful
All my life You have been so so good
With every breath that I am able
I will sing of the goodness of God*

I love Your voice
You have led me through the fire
In darkest night

You are close like no other
I've known You as a father
I've known You as a friend
I have lived in the goodness of God

All my life...

Your goodness is running after
It's running after me
Your goodness is running after
It's running after me

With my life laid down
I'm surrendered now
I give You everything
Your goodness is running after
It's running after me
(Repeat)

All my life... (repeat)

I will sing of the goodness of God'

Prayers

Loving God, you entrusted this planet and its infinitesimal wonders to us but we have helped to bring it to the brink of catastrophe. Help us now to ask: Does the way we live show that we are guided by a different set of values than the materialism and destructive powers of our age?

Bring us now to true repentance so that as your Spirit moves within us – changing and transforming our ways – we may come to live by the way of Christ. May we turn from selfish consumerism to a life of sacrifice, generosity and sharing so that the earth may at last be seen as truly yours.^{vi}

Lord, help us to transform your churches so that they show greater care for our natural environment. Help us to review everything we do in caring for our land, in recycling what we use, in reducing waste and in joining national and international campaigns to save your world. May churches become beacons of environmental awareness within our communities, showing us how to mend the damage that humanity has caused your world.^{vii}

God of our salvation, when our souls are a parched land, summon us to drink deeply from your living waters. When the floods rise up to our necks, rescue us from sinking in the mire. When the storms rage around us, anchor us to the rock of your enduring love. And at all times, keep before our sight those sisters and brothers for whom drought and flood and storm are more than metaphor. Help us to live simply so that others may simply live.^{viii}

Eternal God, your steadfast love is as high as the heavens are above the earth and your everlasting arms are underneath us. In Jesus you made your home among us, and you long for us to find our home in you – safe and free from fear. Alpha and Omega, beginning and end, the one holding all things together, give us liberating confidence to renew our trust in you, seek your will, and choose your paths. Amen.^{ix}

The Lord's Prayer

As Our Saviour taught his disciples, we pray:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

Song

My Jesus, my Saviour
Lord there is none like you
All of my days, I want to praise
The wonders of your mighty love
My comfort, my shelter
Tower of refuge and strength
Let every breath, all that I am
Never cease to worship You

*Shout to the Lord, all the earth let us sing
Power and majesty, praise to the King
Mountains bow down and the seas will roar
At the sound of Your name
I sing for joy at the work of your hands
Forever I'll love you, forever I'll stand*

*Nothing compares to the promise I have
In You
(REPEAT ALL)*

*Shout to the Lord, all the earth let us sing
Power and majesty, praise to the King
Mountains bow down and the seas will roar
At the sound of Your name
I sing for joy at the work of your hands
Forever I'll love you, forever I'll stand
Nothing compares to the promise I have
Nothing compares to the promise I have
Nothing compares to the promise I have
In You^x*

Blessing

May God the Father, who clothes the lilies of the field and feeds the birds of the air, provide us with all we need for life in its fullness.

May God the Son, who fed the five thousand and turned water into wine, feed us with his life and transform us in his love.

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.

And the blessing of God almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with you and remain with you always. **Amen.**^{xi}

Reflection: “We will care for creation and all God’s gifts”

Rev Kerry Tankard

I was interested listening to Bill Gates a couple of weeks ago in an interview he gave, how he recognised the significant impact of coronavirus on the world, but at the same time he believed this was in no way as significant as the climate emergency we are facing as a world. He is certainly not alone in that concern. Then just the other day I was listening to a public health expert and a virologist talking about coronavirus and the latter warning that our global lifestyle means that these pandemics are becoming more inevitable. We watch the news and notice the ever changing weather patterns the world is experiencing, or we hear of the decreasing ice caps and its impact on wildlife there and coastal communities across the globe. The times are full of concern. But, as followers of Christ, what does all this mean for us?

Have you ever come across the book “Wonderful Earth” by Nick Butterworth and Nick Inkpen? It is a superb re-telling of the first chapter of Genesis. It is beautifully illustrated and leads through the ideas of the verses, but in its own creative way. It leads to the reader, be they child, adult, or both, being told: “And last but not least, he made something really wonderful! What do you think it was?” Turn the page and a mirror is there, beneath which is written, “IT WAS YOU!”.

It is a moment of celebration and cheers and leads to the amazement about how clever we have been as human beings and all the wonderful things we have done. Then, then comes the turn . . .

The next pages highlight how we haven’t been doing such a good job of caring for the world lately. There is a lament about how we are behaving, and then there is a final hope that maybe we can change. I offer that book for the same reasons I begin in Genesis, because you and I are a wonderful statement of God’s intention, creative love, and imagination.

It is with some grief that I acknowledge that some in the Christian tradition have spent more time arguing for creation in six days, because the bible says so, than genuinely seeking to ask why this story is told to us in the first place, and how we can be transformed by its living memory in us. It is wasteful and mistaken to spend time establishing the bible as fact, when instead we should be living out the truths it offers into our understanding of being created in God’s image.

Equally saddening is the way in which some have understood verse 28 in this opening part of Genesis, when it says: ²⁸ God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and **subdue** it. **Rule** over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.” (NIV)

²⁸ And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and **subdue** it: and **have dominion** over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. (KJV)

²⁸ God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and **subdue** it; and **have dominion** over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.’ (NRSV)

Subjugation, rule, dominion! All those words are pregnant with rather oppressive meaning and can lead us to a dangerous relationship with creation. Those words, when read apart from the context of God’s creation of human beings in God’s image, are dangerous.

So, let us go back and remember first that this particular call in the Methodist Way of Life, to care for creation and all God’s gifts, is born in our creation in the image of God. What does it mean to be created in that image? There are many answers to that question, but on this occasion, I want to turn to John Wesley for his insight. He saw that image as two-fold. He saw it as a natural image grounded in our intended immortality and God-

given liberty to be those who know, love, and live in God. He also believed that we shared in that image in another way, in a political way and that political image is manifest in our relation to creation. Those two aspects are like two sides of a single coin, with one belonging to the other.

That you are created in God's natural image means, as I said, that you have the liberty to love, to love God, creation, your neighbour, because the love God has is shared with your very humanity. As the letter of John would put it, we love because God first loved us. The political image then flows from that natural image. For Wesley, human beings are created and ordained to rule creation, but to do so with God's sense of mercy, love, and justice. God's character and nature defines all our other relationships and any authority we think we might have. For Wesley, the political image is significant for the whole of creation, and he details this in his sermon "The Great Deliverance". He writes: "man [sic] was God's viceregent upon earth . . . all the blessings of God flowed through him to the inferior creatures. Man was the channel of conveyance between his Creator and the whole brute creation".

We might not choose quite the same language, but it reminds us we have a role, for God, in caring for creation. Why I say all of this is to remind us of the ethics of our care for creation. Our love for creation is not about self-interest or self-preservation, we don't care for creation because we don't want our houses to flood, or our food to run out, but because we are called to care for creation in such ways that it might flourish and flower, literally and metaphorically, for God.

Therefore, the call is to love for love's and God's sake, and not our own. The call is to be those who love creation as channels of the love of God.

What then do we do? Ah, there is the good question.

Below there are some ideas from the MWOL material.

- ✦ Grow in our love of creation: Go for walks. Grow some herbs on our window ledge, know by name the trees, plants and wildlife in our area. Plant trees to mark special events.
- ✦ Support creation with our financial decisions: Let ecological considerations affect our spending and living. Buy local produce, try to shop organically, consider animal welfare and fair trade. Reduce water and energy use, find alternative transport to cars.
- ✦ Lobby for change where we can: Write letters to our MP supporting recycling, green transport, renewable energy initiatives. Joining local ecological groups can help in discovering what action we can take. There are many more resources online.

I invite you to make at least one commitment, but please make more. When you have made that commitment part of your life think what the next one might be.

My Commitments:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

ⁱ Liturgy adapted from Presbyterian World Service & Development Lent Liturgies 2021 written by Rev Mary Whitson.

Song: Words by Jose Aguiar, Singing the Faith 239, TMCP, 2011

ⁱⁱ Margaret Littlecott, The Earth is the Lord's, P. 3, TMCP, 2020.

ⁱⁱⁱ Geoff Floyd, The Earth is the Lord's, P. 81, TMCP, 2020.

^{iv} Words and music Stuart Hine, The Stuart Hine Trust, 1953.

^v Jenn Johnson, Bethel Music, 2019.

^{vi} Maureen Edwards, The Earth is the Lord's, P. 87, TMCP, 2020.

^{vii} Rob Keeley, The Earth is the Lord's, P. 87, TMCP, 2020.

^{viii} Rachel Parkinson, The Earth is the Lord's, P. 81, TMCP, 2020.

^{ix} Leslie Newton, The Earth is the Lord's, P. 83, TMCP, 2020.

^x Words and Music Darlene Zschech, Hillsong Publishing, 1993.

^{xi} Taken from "The Church of England Environment Programme Creation Care Prayers.