



Christian World Service Climate Change Liturgy 2009

GATHERING

Whoever we are and wherever we come from, we share the reality that this earth is our home. So we come at this moment to remind ourselves of the truth that the ways in which we live within this earth home affect for good or ill the home itself and all that dwells within it.

Open to the moment, therefore, and open to one another we come before the mystery of life.

HMYN

Praise with Joy the World's Creator

(Tune: Praise my soul)

Praise with joy the world's creator,
God of justice, love and peace;
Source and end of human knowledge,
Force of greatness without cease.
Celebrate the maker's glory,
Power to rescue and release.

Praise the Son who feeds the hungry,
Frees the captive, finds the lost,
Heals the sick, upsets religion,
Fearless both of fate and cost.
Celebrate Christ's constant presence,
Friend and stranger, guest and host.

Praise the Spirit sent among us,
Liberating truth from pride,
Forging bonds where race or gender,
Age or nation dare divide.
Celebrate the Spirit's treasure,
Foolishness none dare deride.

Praise the Maker, Son and Spirit,
One God in community,
Calling Christians to embody,
One-ness and diversity.
Thus the worlds shall yet believe,
When shown Christ's vibrant unity.

John L Bell and Graham Maule in *Heaven Shall Not Wait*

LITANY OF REPENTANCE

We have forgotten who we are.
We have alienated ourselves from the unfolding of the cosmos.
We have become estranged from the movements of the earth.
We have turned our backs on the cycles of life.

We have forgotten who we are

We have sought only our own security
and failed to attend to those who live
in insecurity.
We have exploited simply for our own
ends, forgetting the others with whom
we share the earth.
We have distorted our knowledge.
We have abused our power.

We have forgotten who we are

Now some lands are barren
And waters are poisoned
And air is polluted.

We have forgotten who we are

Now there are forests dying
And creatures disappearing
And in many lands the humans are
despairing.

We have forgotten who we are

We ask forgiveness.
We ask for the gift of remembering.
We ask for the strength to change.

This liturgy was adapted for CWS's annual Council meeting. It is based on a Walk for the Planet worship service held in Christchurch.

You may like to use part or all of it in conjunction with other material from the backgrounder in your group or parish. Please adapt it to suit your community.

Thanks to Elizabeth Mackie who prepared the liturgy for the Walk for the Planet ecumenical service and to Jim Stuart for the theological reflection.



Children in the Philippines are working to clean up their environment and the climate. Read more in World Watch magazine.



Reading: Isaiah 41: 17 - 20

When the poor and needy seek water,
And there is none, and their tongue is parched with thirst,
I the Lord will answer them.
I the God of Israel will not forsake them.

I will open rivers on the bare heights,
And fountains in the midst of the valleys;
I will make the wilderness a pool of water,
And the dry land springs of water.

I will put in the wilderness the cedar,
The acacia, the myrtle and the olive,
I will set in the desert the cypress,
The plane and the pine together,

So that all may see and know,
All may consider and understand,
That the hand of the Lord has done this,
The Holy One of Israel has created it.

Invite the response at the end of each section: We join with the earth and with one another)

We join with the earth and with one another
To bring new life to the land,
To restore the waters,
To refresh the air.

We join with the earth and with one another.

To renew the forests,
To care for the plants,
To protect the creatures

We join with the earth and with one another.

To celebrate the seas,
To rejoice in the sunlight,
To sing the song of the stars

We join with the earth and with one another.

To create human community,
To promote justice and peace,
To eradicate poverty and inequality,
To remember the generations yet to come

We join with the earth and with one another.

We join together as many and diverse expressions of one loving mystery,
for the healing of the earth and the renewal of all life. Amen



READING

“Consider the idea of God emerging from human engagement with the natural world in our day. In photographs taken from space, our home planet looks like a bright blue marble, swirled around with white clouds. Floating against a background of endless black space, it is a precious little spot that alone among all the planets, moons and asteroids we have explored to date, is covered with a membrane of life. Astronauts who have seen this view with their own eyes speak of its power to change their deepest feelings. Saudi Arabian astronaut Sultan bin Salman al-Saud, part of an international crew, recollected: ‘The first day we all pointed to our own countries. The third day we were pointing to our continents. By the fifth day we were all aware of only one Earth.’ Astronaut Rusty Schweigert, who walked on the moon, noted from that vantage point that Earth is so small you can block it out with your thumb. ‘Then you realise’, he mused ‘that on this beautiful warm blue and white circle, is everything that means anything to you’, all of nature and history, birth and love. And then you are changed forever.”

(Quest for the Living God, Elizabeth A Johnson, 2007. P 181)

MUSIC

What a Wonderful World by Israel Kamakawiwo'ole. (A PowerPoint presentation of CWS partners to accompany this music is available from CWS.)



Poorer communities depend on the earth for their basic survival

SYMBOLS

Earth – symbol is carried forward and placed



Prayer

O God, you who create the earth and the entire universe, fill us with reverence! You are the ground of our being; you drew us from the earth and call us to live in harmony with all that lives. To earth we shall return in the circle of life which is endless. We honour the earth and commit ourselves to live in right relation with the Planet.

Air – Symbol is carried forward and placed



Prayer

O Spirit of the air, you who breathe where you will, breath of our nostrils and wind in the trees, ever-creating, stirring, moving. Move us, shake us, sweep through us with energy, exhilaration and delight.

Fire – Symbol is carried forward and placed



Prayer

O God of the fire, cleansing, refining, tempering to enduring strength; tongued fire of wisdom and courage, free us to dance and to struggle. Shape the new world you call into being, make us strong and resilient.

Water – Symbol is carried forward and placed



Prayer

O Spirit of the water, source and sustenance of life, waters of the womb and of birth, water of tears and toil, waters teeming with fish and plant; bathe and refresh us, nourish and sustain us, weep and work in us, birth with us a renewal of life.

Globe – Symbol is carried forward and placed



Prayer

God of the Universe, you who bring all life into being, create in us a deeper sense of community with all who share life on this planet earth. May we truly know others as our sisters and brothers; may we seek for all a just share in the resources needed to sustain life; may we value and respect all forms of living being and delight in the beauty and variety which are your gifts.

Hymn

The Earth is the Lord's

(Tune: St Denio)

"The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof."
Creation reminds us, O God, of your love.
By grace we are learning, as year leads to year,
We're called to be stewards, your caretakers here.

Your rainforests nurture the world that we share.
Your wetlands give animals shelter and care.
Your coral reefs cradle the life of the sea.
You've shown us, in love, what your good world can be.

Too often, O God, we abuse your good earth.
We fail to remember its beauty and worth.
We take from creation much more than we need,
We threaten your world through indifference and greed.

May we be good stewards of all that you give,
Protecting creation wherever we live.
May we be a church that renews and restores
And lovingly cares for this earth that is yours.

Carolyn Winfrey Gillette

Available: http://www.gbod.org/worship/default.asp?act=reader&item_id=43806&loc_id=17,823

BLESSING

Bless to us, O God,
The earth beneath our feet.
Bless to us, O God,
The path whereon we go.
Bless to us, O God,
The people whom we meet.

Amen

Children's Resources

Use World Watch No 58, Clean Up the Climate as a focus. Many older children will have discussed climate change at school and be able to share some information or stories of establishing worm farms, recycling centres or other joint efforts. This could provide an opportunity to talk about what your congregation might do in response.

Other hymns

AA 26 Come to our land
AA 65 Ia tatou vivii atu nei
AA 119 Sing green
AA 143 Touch the earth lightly
WOV 43 Give to our God immortal praise
WOV 70 All things bright and beautiful
WOV 77 For the beauty of the earth
WOV 91 Morning has broken
WOV 543 God of grace and God of glory

A Theological Reflection To Restore the World

At the heart of Christianity is the affirmation that God is incarnate in the world. How we interpret the meaning of this affirmation determines how we understand God's relationship to the world. If we believe God is wholly other in relation to the world, then we will tend to emphasise God's transcendence over the world, God's distance from the world. However, if we believe God is deeply involved in the world, then we will emphasise God's immanence in the world, God's involvement in the world.

The French palaeontologist and Jesuit, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, once observed, 'Jesus must be loved as a world' (Writings in Time of War, Harper, 1968). As a Roman Catholic he was pondering if the meaning of the catholicity of the church was really about the relationship of God to the world. A broader definition, he said, was needed. God's household, that is, the world was the whole planet, not just the church and it included all beings, humans, animals, insects and plants, living in interdependent relations with all other life forms and earth processes. He called this 'ecological catholicity'.

This new global sense of incarnation has shifted the theological emphasis away from detaching humans from the world – (that is human beings are sojourners on earth, hoping to return eventually to their true home in heaven) by recovering the distinctive heart of incarnational Christianity – God is with us in the flesh, here and now, on this earth and Jesus Christ is the paradigm, the good news, that is the one in whom we live, move and have our being as part and parcel of the creation. As God does not despise the world, neither should we. Sallie McFague observes, 'We have been given permission to love the world by the incarnation of God in the world.' (A New Climate for Theology, Fortress:34)

This new paradigm of ecological catholicity suggests a new interpretation of our responsibility towards the world. Human beings are co-caretakers of God's household, the earth. The mission of church then is to share the good news with all of creation – not just human beings, but all living beings, the entire inhabited earth. This new theological paradigm of ecological catholicity invites us as Christians to become involved not just in healing people, but also in the task of healing the planet. The whole cannot be healthy if the parts are sick. This means radical changes in the ways we live so that the rest can also live – specifically, the 20 percent of human beings who exploit 80 per cent of the world's resources. If the earth is going to survive, if all living beings are going to flourish, then ecological catholicity requires us not only to live differently but also to live responsibly. If God is incarnate in the world, then the good news of the gospel is not just for human beings but for the whole planet. In other words Christianity is not faithful to the gospel if it only looks after its own institutional preservation and ignores the healing of the whole world. In Jewish Midrash (rabbinic elaborations of biblical texts) there is a phrase *tikkun olam* which means 'repairing the world'. The rabbis teach that the world is repaired when it is physically healed and consequently viable and sustainable. This takes place, the rabbis add, by one 'act of kindness' at a time.

Rev Dr James Stuart

