

ORDER OF SERVICE - Sunday 11th October 2020 – Season of Creation 4

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation ... Colossians 1:15

WELCOME & CALL TO WORSHIP

Saide

Good morning. I'm Saide, welcome to worship for the fourth and final Sunday in our Season of Creation.

Today we welcome Geoff Thompson as our preacher. Geoff is a member of our congregation who teaches theology at Pilgrim Theological College, the UCA's theological college in Parkville. We will engage with the mystery of Creation and ask 'who are we that we think to control and impose order over this mystery?' Clara and Dave will continue to lead us through Moses' epic journey where the people in their despair seek to gain control over their situation.

So here we are, the people of God, scattered in many places
Different views out our windows, different paths to walk on.
Here we are, the people of God, called to this time of worship
Carrying our burdens, our hopes, our longings
For our lives, the people we love, for God's good creation.
Come let us worship God together with full hearts and open hands.

SONG: Come O God, TIS 181

1. Come, O God of all the earth: **come to us, O righteous One;**
come, and bring our love to birth: **in the glory of your Son.**

*Sing out earth and skies! sing of the God who loves you;
raise your joyful cries; dance to the life around you.*

2. Come, O God of wind and flame: **fill the earth with righteousness;**
teach us all to sing your name: **may our lives your love confess.**

3. Come, O God of flashing light: **twinkling star and burning sun;**
God of day and God of night: **in your light we all are one.**

4. Come, O God of snow and rain: **shower down upon the earth;**
come, O God of joy and pain: **God of sorrow, God of mirth.**

5. Come, O Justice, come, O Peace: **come and shape our hearts anew;**
come and make oppression cease: **bring us all to life in you.**

SONG: Come, O God, by Marty Haugen, from Together in Song, Harper Collins Religious WORD OF LIFE

CANDLE LIGHTING

Brad Coath

I light this candle as a reminder of Jesus' words -
You are the light of the world.

It's a reminder of our call to resist ways of living
in a convenience and consumer culture
And to live more deeply into ways of caring for
and partnering with the land on which we live.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Laurence Alvis

Greetings from Gippsland

We acknowledge and respect the Gunaikurnai people,
the traditional custodians of this land since time immemorial.

We are learning that the land is not ours to own, but to look after;
and that if we listen, we may hear in it the calling of the eternal Spirit.

**Responding to this call, we commit ourselves
to work for justice, reconciliation**

PRAYER OF ADORATION & CONFESSION

Saide

God of all the earth as we go on our daily walks

We exult in the beauty of Spring, the abundance of flowers

The astonishing variety of colours and shapes and scents

And we know that nothing we humans can create or imagine

Can ever compare to the chaotic glory of creation.

Christ Jesus, firstborn of all creation, wisdom Word

We are drawn to you, to the mystery of your call on our lives

We hear your voice, we feel your touch, we see your face

in and through the people we know and strangers we meet.

You call us to work for justice and peace for all creation.

Holy Spirit, breath of life, you stir us into action

Breathing in we meditate on the mystery of creation

Breathing out we contemplate how we might respond

You pray with us, urging us on to seek new ways

To live in harmony with all that has been created. Amen

God of all the earth with aching hearts we bring you our confessions.

As we have grown in knowledge and skill, we have lost our way

We have laid waste to the beauty, abundance and diversity of creation.

Forgive us and guide the actions that we take now to restore balance.

Help us to listen, to learn from First peoples, from young people

From scientists and activists, from birds, animals and the very earth herself.

Forgive us our ignorance and set us free to be a people of peace. Amen

David

WORD OF GRACE

Saide

God calls us to join her in the glorious dance of creation

So let us stand up and dance, rejoicing in the abundant grace of God

Secure in the knowledge that in the name of Christ

Our sins are forgiven.

Thanks be to God. Amen

WITH THE CHILDREN

Dave and Clara

With Exodus 32:1-14 -

Parts: **Narrator: Lydia**, **crowds**, **Aaron (Tom)**, **God (Valentina)**, **Moses (Samuel)**

Dave and Clara talk about the Ten Commandments, Moses, God, mountains, 40 days and what the Israelites do while Moses is up the mountain with God.

Narrator: When the people saw that Moses took a long time to come down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron, and said to him,

Crowds: "Come, make gods for us, who shall go before us. As for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has happened to him."

Aaron: Aaron said to them, "Take off the gold rings that are on the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me."

Narrator: So all the people took the gold rings from their ears, and brought them to Aaron. He took the gold from them, formed it in a mould, and cast an image of a calf; and they said,

Crowds: "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!"

Aaron: When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it; and he announced, "Tomorrow shall be a festival to the LORD."

Narrator: They rose early the next day, and offered burnt offerings and brought sacrifices of well-being; and the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to sing and dance.

God (Valentina?): The LORD said to Moses, "Go down at once! Your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have become corrupt. They have been quick to turn away from what I commanded. They have cast for themselves an image of a golden calf, and have worshiped it and sacrificed to it, and said, 'These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!'"

The LORD said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and they are a stiff-necked people.

Now leave me alone, so that my anger may burn against them and I may consume them. Then I will make you into a great nation."

Narrator: But Moses sought the favour of the LORD, and said,

Moses: "O LORD, why should your anger burn against your people, whom you brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and a mighty hand?... change your mind and do not bring disaster on your people.

Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, when you said to them, 'I will multiply your descendants like the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.'"

Narrator: And the LORD changed his mind about the disaster God planned to bring on his people.

SONG: Faith, hope and love, ATOK 376

1. Faith, hope, and love - this is what we long for.
Faith, hope, and love - this is what we need.
Faith, hope, and love - this is what we cry for.
Oh, teach us how to live.

2. Trust in the Truth . . .

3. Patience within . . .

4. Freedom for all . . .

5. Faith, hope, and love . . .

SONG: [Faith, hope & love](#), © 1994 Trisha Watts, from [All together okay](#), Openbook Publishers, Reproduced with permission under ONE LICENCE # 604502

EPISTLE: Colossians 1:15-20

Gwen

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; ¹⁶for in* him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. ¹⁷He himself is before all things, and in* him all things hold together. ¹⁸He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. ¹⁹For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

HEBREW SCRIPTURES: Ecclesiastes 1:12-18

Mal

12 I, the Teacher,* when king over Israel in Jerusalem, ¹³applied my mind to seek and to search out by wisdom all that is done under heaven; it is an unhappy business that God has given to human beings to be busy with. ¹⁴I saw all the deeds that are done under the sun; and see, all is vanity and a chasing after wind.*

¹⁵ What is crooked cannot be made straight,
and what is lacking cannot be counted.

¹⁶ I said to myself, 'I have acquired great wisdom, surpassing all who were over Jerusalem before me; and my mind has had great experience of wisdom and knowledge.' ¹⁷And I applied my mind to know wisdom and to know madness and folly. I perceived that this also is but a chasing after wind.*

¹⁸ For in much wisdom is much vexation,
and those who increase knowledge increase sorrow.

For these words of witness and for Christ the Word

Thanks be to God

REFLECTION –

Geoff

Including extracts from Job 38:1-7,39:11-18

The season of creation has given us an opportunity to explore a major theme of the Christian faith, a theme that we have drawn from our Jewish inheritance.

Creation is a very rich part of the network of Christian beliefs.

But as we know all too well, it's also been the focus of some of the major distortions of the Christian faith.

Two weeks ago, Ian reminded us of one of those distortions when he spoke about the fundamentalist apocalyptic theologies which see creation as something to be escaped.

Those theologies foster an indifference to, even a contempt for, creation.

Ian drew the contrast between that disregard of creation on the one hand, and the core Christian conviction, on the other hand, that God has poured Godself into creation. On the one hand, human disregard. On the other hand, a massive divine investment in it.

It is hard to overstate the importance of a positive view of creation to the foundations of Christian faith.

In fact, in the ancient environment in which the core Christian beliefs were developed, the goodness of creation was a minority view. For many in that ancient environment, the realm of physical matter was considered something of a cosmic misfire.

This is a key reason why the idea of God pouring Godself into creation, the idea of incarnation – God assuming created flesh in the human life of Jesus – was often met either with opposition or incomprehension.

And we got a glimpse in the reading from Colossians, of just how provocative the first Christians were in bringing Christ and creation together. They could not be closer. Christ, we are told, is the “firstborn of creation.” In him, “all things in heaven and on earth were created.” There is no hint here that creation is a cosmic misfire.

Those who were troubled by this exalted claim about Jesus were not troubled because they thought it disrespectful to other religious figures.

Rather, they were troubled, even scandalized, by the idea of a God would deign to enter the mess of creation. Gods, so it was thought by some, kept themselves godly by staying untouched by this unholy matter.

There were enough Christians in the early church who were sympathetic to this view for it to produce a crisis.

By ultimately affirming the incarnation, the first Christians were not simply making particular claims about Jesus and God. They were also making a counter-cultural positive claim about creation, that God loved it to the point taking up life within it.

In that early environment, that was a hard-won claim.

Now, of course, it has to be acknowledged that all these fine words might be just that – fine words that will be blown away by the gathering storm of the climate emergency.

But in its own way, even our season of has been a reminder that words matter.

It's an opportunity to learn to think differently about creation. We learn to listen and to tell a narrative different to the narratives of domination and disregard.

But learning to think differently, we can be helped to push back against the dominant narratives. Different ideas can equip and motivate us in our advocacy and lifestyles.

This morning I'd like to offer an opportunity to focus on one of the voices in the Bible, one of the neglected voices, that I think can contribute to our ongoing thinking about creation. It's a modest contribution, but one that warrants having a place in our thinking.

One of the reasons this voice is neglected is because it is uttered somewhat quietly and because, arguably, it is a voice of dissent within the bible's own more dominant theologies of creation.

This is another a reminder of what Dave has already alluded to in the time with the children. The different books of the bible are themselves uneven in their theologies.

Bits get added by later editors as the books are interpreted and adapted to the contexts in which they were read.

Some of them, like Exodus, contain various internal tensions.

And there then there are tensions between different books.

For me, these are among the things that makes engaging with the bible so intellectually compelling and challenging.

It's not a flat text seeking our affirmation or rejection. It's more like being in a library where we are given the resources to enter a richly textured conversation and to locate ourselves in that conversation.

The voice I invite us to listen to is not the voice of one writer, but of a school of thought. We find it in the books of Job and Ecclesiastes. We've already heard the passage from Ecclesiastes, and I'll come to that shortly.

But first to Job.

At the heart of the book is a dispute between Job and his pious friends about why Job is experiencing the terrible suffering that has come upon him.

His friends answer is straightforward: he must have sinned. They operate with a universal moral law. You keep it, God rewards you. You violate it, God punishes you.

Job protests and protests and protests his innocence. He insists there must be a deeper explanation.

When God comes on the scene, by way of a long speech from the whirlwind, it is not to provide Job with an explanation. But the friends' tit-for tat-theology is completely repudiated.

Even though the resolution of the book may not satisfy us, part of its plot lies in God inviting Job to survey creation: its scale, beauty and majesty.

At one point the narrator of the story has God draw attention to the ostrich.

Let me read part of the relevant text from Chapter 39, verses 13-18.

The ostrich's wings flap wildly, though its pinions lack plumage;

For it leaves its eggs...on the ground, forgetting that a foot may crush them.

It deals cruelly with its young, as if they were not its own...yet it has no fear;

Because God has made it forget wisdom, and given it no share in understanding.

The point of this is that the ostrich and its form of life doesn't make sense. It has wings but can't fly. Against the supposed order of nature, and with a bit of poetic licence on the part of the writer of Job, it is careless with its young. Job's poetic author drawing attention to a form of life that doesn't share in the common instincts to protect and preserve.

Job is being challenged to broaden his understanding of the goodness of creation. This breach of ordered categories is not chaos or even disorder, but a diversity of which God is the author.

On this passage, one Hebrew bible scholar has said this: "God confronts Job with things that his categories cannot possibly comprehend." Job is presented with things of which God is the author and which share in the goodness of creation.

This voice is heard again in Ecclesiastes, a book which is presented as an exploration and reflection on life carried out by 'The Teacher.' Its theology sits quite askew to the theologies that surround it in the canon.

Much of it is a quest to find meaning, purpose and order in the world. And the failure of that quest is made right at the outset: "vanity of vanities. All is vanity."

This same cynical despair comes at the end of the passage we listened to. As the Teacher surveys the world, and all the deeds that are done, he observes little but a chasing after the wind.

"What is crooked," he states, "cannot be made straight."

It's not just a passing comment. But when the author returns to it in chapter 7, it has become a positive statement about God's creative work. "Consider the work of God; who can make straight what God has made crooked."

The lack of straightness is not disorder; it's God's good creation.

As one commentator has said of this verse: "The Teacher applies the inscrutability of God's creative work against the human presumption to categorize and thereby control what goes on under the sun." And in the words of another: "The universe has wrinkles that are part of God's good creation."

Why do I call this a dissenting voice?

Christian faith's more influential ideas of creation have been drawn from opening chapters of Genesis. Those chapters have provided a set of words around creation that sees order as the tool by which God holds chaos at bay. Within that framework, diversity, whilst not denied, is always controlled by order.

Too little order, too much diversity, too close to chaos.

When these ideas are connected in this way, we are more easily closed to the mysterious diversity of God's good creation.

To give this mysterious diversity a higher profile in our thinking about creation becomes another tool to help us push back against the narratives of ordering that so easily yield to narratives of domination.

And so this dissenting voice in scripture can prod, provoke and resource us more fully to honour what God has made, to observe it more carefully, and let it speak to us. And it might help us resist straightening out the wrinkles that add to the beauty and majesty of creation. Amen.

SONG: Let All Creation Dance, TIS 187

1. Let all creation dance in energies sublime,
as order turns with chance, unfolding space and time,
for nature's art in glory grows,
and newly shows God's mind and heart.

2. God's breath each force unfurls, igniting from a spark
expanding starry swirls, with whirlpools dense and dark.
Though moon and sun seem mindless things,
Each orbit sings: 'Your will be done.'

3. Our own amazing earth, with sunlight, cloud and storms
and life's abundance growth in lovely shapes and forms,
is made for praise, a fragile whole,
and from its soul heaven's music plays.

4. Life heart and soul and voice: in Christ all praises meet
and nature shall rejoice as all is made complete.
In hope be strong, all life befriend
And kindly tend Creation's song.

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OFFERING

Presentation - focus on the commitments being made by members of the congregation

Climate Action Group

Season of Creation Prayer (edited) by UCA President Dr Deidre Palmer

Jessica Kvensakul

Creator God, in Christ Jesus you come to bring renewal and reconciliation to the whole of creation.

Guide us into the way of respect and care for the Earth and all living things.

We pray that you will renew our resolve to participate with you in the healing and renewal of our earth.

May your Holy Spirit strengthen us with courage, to be bearers of your creative and life-giving presence in all the Earth.

In the name of Jesus Christ, the Bread of Heaven,
Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Ray

God of all the earth we pray for the world

Our beautiful broken resilient amazing home.

We long for open hearts and minds willing to see

That this earth is a gloriously diverse and chaotic gift

Not a resource to be plundered by a privileged few.

We commit to making a difference and hope that one day

All creatures, plants and people will be nurtured and honoured.

Christ Jesus, firstborn of all creation we pray for the church

Your body, your voice, your hands at work in the world.

We long for open hearts and minds willing to see

That all people are held in your steadfast loving grace.

When we stray as people have done throughout history

You call us away from the idols that we have made

Back into communion with you and all creation.

Holy Spirit, life, heart, soul and voice we pray for our community

Separated now and yet held together in hope and love.

We long for open hearts and minds willing to see

The hidden ones, most scarred by this crippling pandemic

Those with shattered dreams, broken hearts and lost hope.

As we look towards a time when our community opens up

May we be mindful, gentle and welcoming in our returning. Amen

NOTICES

Matthew & Michael

Good morning.

I'm Matthew Cameron

And I'm Michael Cameron

And this is the BUC News

First off - a Riding the Waves update

Last week Christina invited us to look through her bedroom window out into the street

And this week Simone and Michael offer us a glimpse of work and art making.

Make sure you look at the photos with the story.

Hmm I wonder who will feature next week!!

Did you know that many of the Title slides in today's worship feature Michael's photos?

I didn't know I was taking photos

You were you not ya goose. It's Michael Rigby.

And did you know that many of the others feature Jane Allardice's photos?

Beautiful photos, a lovely way see the world through other people's eyes.

The Climate Action Group have been busy these last four weeks.

That's for sure. I've learnt a lot from their presentations.

Last week they invited us to make a commitment.

It's been quite interesting today to see what people are committing to.

Check out the [Earth](#) button or the [Olive Press](#) for a link to the Commitment sheet.

Our Pastoral Care ministry is up for review.

See the [Olive Press](#) for details and to read the Vision Report that was prepared 5 years ago.

You might have noticed lots of silverbeet in our garden.

Let us know if you want some.

Because there's only so much silverbeet one family can consume!!

Join Geoff for a post worship Zoom Chat at 10:30am.

The link is on the website.

Goodbye and thanks for listening.

SONG: Canticle Of Daniel, NCYC.99.7

1. And you sun and moon and stars - Oh bless the Lord
And all you showers of rain - Oh bless the Lord
And all you breezes and winds - Oh bless the Lord
And you fire and rain - Oh bless the Lord

Refrain: To God be highest glory and praise forever more

2. And you dew and frosts and snow - Oh bless the Lord
And you night time and day - Oh bless the Lord
And you darkness and light - Oh bless the Lord
And you lightning and clouds - Oh bless the Lord Refrain

3. And you mountains and hills - Oh bless the Lord
And you all plants of the earth - Oh bless the Lord
And you fountains and springs - Oh bless the Lord
And you rivers and seas - Oh bless the Lord Refrain

4. Let all the earth bless the Lord (repeat to fade)

SONG: [Canticle of Daniel](#), Words and Music: Don Stewart © 1980, from [It all depends](#), NCYC '99 Songbook, Uniting Church in Australia; Reproduced with permission under ONE LICENCE # 604502

BENEDICTION

Saide

With full hearts and open hands let's leave this time of shared worship

To step out into the week to come to give glory to God in creation.

Letting go of our need for control and instead revelling in chaotic diversity,

committing to making a difference in whatever way we can.

In all our living and loving, giving and sharing, doing and dreaming

May we always know and be secure in the steadfast love of God

Guided by Christ, firstborn of all creation

And sustained by the life giving breath of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

THANK YOU

Liturgist:

Saide Cameron

Lighting of Christ Candle:

Brad Coath

Acknowledgement of Country:

Laurence Alvis

Prayer Leader:

David Cameron

Children's time:

Clara Hall

Dave Hall

(Children, Youth & Young Adult
Pastor)

Bible readings:

Gwen Arnold

Mal Rowe

Lydia Jacka

Valentina Satvedi Leydon

Tom Leydon

Samuel Hall

Reflection:

Rev Geoff Thompson

(Minister of the Word)

Climate Action Offering:

Climate Action Group and others

Prayer-Jessica Kvensakul

Prayers of the people:

Ray Cameron

Musicians:

Alistair Hunter (Co-ordinator)

James Balsillie

Steph Gesling

Elaine Potter

Julia Potter

Courtney Rohde

Shawn Whelan

Notices:

Matthew Cameron

Michael Cameron

Images:

Jane Allardice

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Ray Cameron

Dave Hall

Lydia Jacka

Jamie Thom

CLOSING SLIDE: Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Job 38:4a