

# Order of Service 19/9/21 Season of Creation 3

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## Opening Verse

Season of Creation 3 - Sky Sunday  
'The heavens are telling the story of God' Psalm 19:1

## Call to Worship

Kirsty

Let us listen to the voices of creation all around us...  
This is not speech or words like the ones we use,  
Yet the voices of creation go out through all the earth,  
the solid speech of God in our midst.  
Let us worship this God.

## Song of praise

Heaven and Earth (AoV.2.53)

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*Heaven and earth, join to worship your Creator!  
Sing to the Lord, praise the One from whom you came.  
Sing a new song to the God who goes before us.  
Making all new, leaving nobody the same.  
Sing a new song to the God who goes before us.  
Making it all new, leaving nobody the same.*

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Heaven and earth, John L Bell © 1995 WGRG, Iona Community, Glasgow. Used with permission; from As One Voice 2, Willow Connection Pty. Ltd. Reproduced with permission under ONE LICENCE # 604502,

## Acknowledgement of Country

Claire, Whadjuk Noongar Perth

We acknowledge and respect the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation,  
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, and care of the earth.**

## Welcome

Kirsty

Good morning and welcome to worship this morning. I am Kirsty, and with a team of people in front of and behind the camera, laptop and sound system, I will be leading our worship this morning. It will be wonderful to have BUC member Rev Graeme Garret preaching for us.

Today is the third Sunday in our September Season of Creation series. It is Sky Sunday.

We often see the sky, or the heavens, as a backdrop or a passive bystander, rather than as a key player in creation, in God's story, in our story.

When we look more carefully, we can see in it the solid speech of God. We will be exploring this today as we focus on the sky as an active participant in God's life, in Jesus' life and in our lives. We will sing our way through the birth and death of Jesus and celebrate new life in the risen Christ.

As we prepare for our prayers of Adoration and Confession, let us remember the birth of Jesus, under a night sky.

## Song

### Silent Night (TIS 311)

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- 1. Silent night, holy night: all is calm, all is bright  
round the virgin mother and child, holy infant so tender and mild,  
sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace.*
  - 2. Silent night, holy night: shepherds quake at the sight;  
glories stream from heaven afar, heavenly hosts sing, 'Alleluia;  
Christ the Saviour is born, Christ the Saviour is born.'*
  - 3. Silent night, holy night: wondrous star, lend your light;  
with the angels let us sing Alleluia to our King;  
Christ our Saviour is born, Christ our Saviour is born.*
- 

SONG: [Silent night](#), by Joseph Mohr, from [Together in Song](#), Harper Collins Religious, PUBLIC DOMAIN

## Prayers of Adoration and Confession

Kirsty

Let us pray:

Earth Mother, Heavenly Father  
Child of God and Giver of life.

You are present in the night,  
When all is calm and we see the stars of the Milky Way and the moon,  
when we see the lights of the city against the backdrop of the night sky  
and remember the Boonwurrung stories of the eel and the Birrarung under the night sky.

We know you at dawn, as the sun peeks through the trees,  
bringing warmth and light to a new day  
and we hear creation wake.

You speak to us in the clouds that promise rain  
and under the grey expanse of an overcast day.  
In the dappled blue sky over our houses  
and as we look at blossom buds ready to burst forth.

We hear you as the sun sets in the city streets  
on the river bank  
and over the ocean.

In light and in darkness,  
In our lives under city and country skies,  
In places we have built and in places we where we tread lightly,  
From our birth to our death,  
You are with us. We adore you.

Source, Word and Breath of life  
Forgive us when we do not recognise you in creation,  
When we do not hear you speaking to us.  
When we see the heavens as distant rather than an integral part of our lives,  
When we look for you somewhere else, rather than among us,  
When in the midst of our grief and dismay, we feel that you have forsaken us and lose hope,  
When we do not stand with you.

Amen

As we prepare to hear the Word of Grace, let us remember the death of Jesus under a dark sky,  
knowing that on the third day he rose and gives us life.

## Song

Were you there? (TIS 345) v1, 4

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- 1. Were you there when they crucified my Lord?  
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?  
O sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble;  
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?*
  - 4. Were you there when the sun refused to shine? . . .*
  - 5. Were you there when they laid him in the tomb? . . .*
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SONG: Were you there?, based on an African-American spiritual, from Together in Song, Harper Collins Religious, PUBLIC DOMAIN

## Word of Grace

Kirsty

Jesus Christ, Son of God,  
You are with us as we journey through life  
When the sun does not shine and all seems dark  
And in our times of great joy.  
You know these moments too.  
And so we can say with confidence:  
Our sin is forgiven:  
**Thanks be to God.**

## Gospel Reading – Mark 15:33-39

Ralph Eduardo

When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, "Listen, he is calling for Elijah." And someone ran, filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink, saying, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down." Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. Now when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was God's Son!"

## With the Children

Dave

Dave and Susannah talk about the impact of soft plastics on our our environment.

## Song

Canticle of Daniel (NCYC 99.7)

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- 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)*

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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

## **Book of Psalms: Psalm 19:1-10, 14**

**Maxine**

The heavens are telling the glory of God;  
and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.  
Day to day pours forth speech,  
and night to night declares knowledge.  
There is no speech, nor are there words;  
their voice is not heard;  
yet their voice goes out through all the earth,  
and their words to the end of the world.  
In the heavens he has set a tent for the sun,  
which comes out like a bridegroom from his wedding canopy,  
and like a strong man runs its course with joy.  
Its rising is from the end of the heavens,  
and its circuit to the end of them;  
and nothing is hid from its heat.  
The law of the LORD is perfect,  
reviving the soul;  
the decrees of the LORD are sure,  
making wise the simple;  
the precepts of the LORD are right,  
rejoicing the heart;  
the commandment of the LORD is clear,  
enlightening the eyes;  
the fear of the LORD is pure,  
enduring forever;  
the ordinances of the LORD are true  
and righteous altogether.  
More to be desired are they than gold,  
even much fine gold;  
sweeter also than honey,  
and drippings of the honeycomb...  
Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart  
be acceptable to you,  
O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.

## **Reflection - The heavens declare**

**Graeme**

### **A meditation on Psalm 19**

Today is Sky Sunday, third in the season of creation. What does that hold for us?

Are we being urged to be mindful of the great blue dome above us? And for a moment, - instead of taking it for granted – to notice it? Even appreciate it as a wondrous aspect of God's creation? Is that what is asked of us today?

Well, yes. And it would be a thing of no small significance for the planet if more of us, more often, paused to honour the blue sky, the living air, the setting sun, the Milky Way, for what they are. Things of glory. Things of mystery. Things of destiny.

But while important, that is not today's focal concern. Sky Sunday asks us to consider the sky in the light of Psalm 19. And if we do that, we find ourselves lured into territory that is strange to say the least.

The heavens are telling the glory of God;  
and the firmament [the dome of the sky]  
proclaims [God's] handiwork.  
Day to day pours forth speech,  
and night to night declares knowledge.

Is that saying what it seems to be saying? Not just that the sky – both daytime and the night-time sky – is magnificent, and as such manifests, at least to the eye of faith, the grandeur of God. But that sky, day and night, *speaks*. It tells, it proclaims, it pours forth speech, it declares knowledge – of God.

That's startling, if we let it sink in. For Psalm 19, sky is *word*. Word of God. We are accustomed to thinking of scripture, or preaching, or Jesus Christ as 'word of God'. And the psalm certainly has no problem with that. Verses 7 to 10 are all about the *Torah*: the 'law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul'; the decrees of the Lord are sure, making wise the simple.' Familiar territory. But the first six verses of the psalm are dedicated entirely to the *sky*. The *heavens* are telling ... Sky and scripture alike, speaking God.

The psalm is aware this is paradoxical. What do you mean, the sky 'speaks' God? Does the air possess a mouth that it might utter words? Does the sun wield a pen that it might set down language we can read?

Well, no. The psalm acknowledges the objection.

There is no speech, nor are there words;  
their voice is not heard;

But no sooner is this apparently obvious point conceded, than it is undone!

And 'yet their voice' – the *voice* of the sky, air, sun – 'goes out through all the earth, 'and their words' – the *words* of sky, air, sun – to the end of the world.' (vv. 3-4)

First the sky speaks. It declares, proclaims, pours forth speech. Then, no, there is no speech, no words and no voice. Then yes another reversal. Now there *is* a voice that goes through all the earth, and words that go to the end of the world!

This paradox – if not flat contradiction – is exactly where the psalmist wants to land us. The intention is to shake us from our theological slumbers. When I think 'word of God', I *automatically* think words, words spoken by a preacher, words written in the Bible, the word that became flesh in the figure of Jesus. Words that fit *my* linguistic capacity.

Ah, there's the rub, says the psalmist. Such imagination of God's speech is too narrow. It's too, too human. The word of God is bigger than that. It runs through the universe. The *heavens* declare the glory of God. Before and beyond the prophet, before and beyond the Bible, before and beyond the appearance of Jesus, the *sky* declares God, and more eloquently than human speech. ...

But how?

That's not so easy to say, especially in a culture like ours which, unlike our First Nations People, tends to see the world and the things that make it up as objects, not voices. As background beings, not conversation partners.

Let's approach this question by way of sacraments. Take baptism. When we gather around that beautiful glass pool at the front of our church in a service of baptism, we know – not in our heads, but in our hearts – that the water in the pool is more than just H<sub>2</sub>O. The water becomes that which is not *mere* water (if there is such a thing!). It becomes a dynamic mediation of the cleansing power of the Spirit, of the reconciling love of Christ, of the life-giving energy of the Creator.

The water “speaks”. It precipitates us into the presence of the God in ways that words can't match. Water saturates us bodily. Its fluid, life-giving, thirst quenching qualities – yes, and its potential to come at us in raging torrents at times – demonstrates that God's speech is solid as well as spiritual; God's presence, material as well as ideal.

And I have felt  
A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime  
Of something far more deeply interfused,  
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
And the round ocean and the living air,  
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;<sup>1</sup>

So William Wordsworth, giving voice to what the psalmist spoke millennia before him. The setting sun, the living air, the blue sky are interfused with a *presence* that disturbs our theological slumbers. That surprises us with joy, if we care to note. Sky is sacramental. Part of the natural world (like water) which, if approached in faith, mediates the presence of God, the creator, who called it forth from nothingness in the first place.

But Psalm 19 gives us a way to move beyond Wordsworth's rather general sense of ‘a presence that disturbs me’ in the light of setting suns, the living air, and the blue sky.

It picks out one aspect of the sky, an unmissable aspect, to represent the whole – the sun. ‘In the heavens,’ says the psalmist, ‘[God] has set a tent for the *sun*.’ We can work with that. The sky, whether deep blue at midday, or jet black at midnight, envelops the sun, like an enormous canopy. And the sun ‘comes out [of that tent] like a bridegroom from his wedding chamber.’ The glory of the rising sun flames out like the passion of a young man on his honeymoon.

Who then is the bride? The earth of course! The light and warmth of the sun pours prodigally across the body of the earth. This union of bridegroom and bride engenders astonishing life. The brimming vitality of the planet.

That's a word of God, says the psalmist. Do you hear it? God comes to every created being with a nuptial promise; a promise of light, life, warmth, love. Day in, day out. We can feel it in our bodies!

More. The sun (says the psalm) emerges, ‘and like a strong man runs its course with joy.’ The great diurnal rhythm of day and night is the running of a powerful and magnificently ordered energy, a formidable flow of being. Utterly dependable. The foundational pulse of being.

That's a word of God, says the psalmist. It speaks God's joy in creating. All the world. All the time. Do you hear it? Do you feel it in your body?

More. ‘Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them.’ Everything on earth is held in the reiterating, inexhaustible embrace of morning and evening. The rising and the setting sun speaks – shouts – the ubiquitous generosity of grace. As Jesus said in *his* famous exegesis of the heavens, ‘for God makes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and

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<sup>1</sup> Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey, on Revisiting the Banks of the Wye During a Tour, July 13, 1798

sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.’ (Matt 5.45). Do you hear it? Do you feel it in your body?

For us, in our time, a final sting remains in this master class of sky eloquence. A sombre word. To the joyful solar message of God’s love, power, and inclusiveness is joined a disturbing cry. ‘And nothing is hid from its *heat*.’

In a time when rising planetary temperature, caused by flooding the living air with CO<sub>2</sub>, is threatening the life of the cosmic bride, we would do well to attend to *this* word of God also, which now pours forth, day unto day and night unto night.

‘Nothing – *nothing* – is hid from its heat.’ Do we hear it? Do we feel it in our bodies?

## Song

Where were you? (Shawn Whelan)

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*“Where were you when the universe sprang to life?  
Where were you when I made the day and the night?  
Where were you when the morning stars sang, to all the heavens’ delight?”*

*“Have you walked into the springs of the sea?  
Have you dwelled where the gates of death are revealed?  
Have your minds yet comprehended the breadth of all that I see?”*

***O God, You breathe through all time and space.  
O God, we know You here in this place.  
Help us learn to sit in silence, to open up to Your grace.***

***Oohh...***

*“Do you know the mountain goat in the wild?  
Do you know the way she nurtures her child?  
Do you know the way I treasure the earth that you have defiled?”*

*“O behold the birds of air that I feed.  
O behold the deadly toll of your greed.  
O behold the sparrow falling, and all that you never heed.”*

***O God, Your beauty all round us shines.  
O God, we’re breaking Your good design.  
Help us learn a humble spirit, before we run out of time.***

***O God, we pray You make us anew  
O God, our damage help us undo  
Help us hear Your call to change as we tend creation with You  
Help us hear Your call to change as we tend creation with You***

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## Offering

Let us make our offering for the church and the world,  
for our community, and communities in many places.

Look up. Look out. Look around.

See God’s creation. Feel God’s presence. Hear God’s love.

May we share this love with others by sharing our time, our skills and our money. Amen.

Kirsty

## Prayers of the People

Helen Burnham

During the Prayers of the People, I invite you to add your own prayers when I pause to put a flower in the water.

Here we are Lord

Maybe sitting in front of the TV screen, or still in bed, with a cup of tea, and we give thanks for the people and the technology that allows us, to worship together. We pray for all the things we do as a community. The Olive Way, Olive Arts, and all the groups that have gone online because we are in Lockdown. Draw us together to support each other, so that no one is left alone. We pray for Churches and groups throughout the world that are doing their best to care for the communities we all live in.

Just for the moment I would like everyone, to see through your eyes, Creator God. High above the earth, above my home, my city, my country. See a world with no borders or countries. See just how fragile our earth is, as it spins in space. See how we are all connected. Understand that what we do, and how we live, effects life all over this planet. We pray as we walk the earth, feel the wind, breathe the air, see the birds, animals and insects, that we understand we do not own this land, but are privileged to be here, to share and care for your creation.

We aren't sure where to start in praying for our world. We pray for all of us living in fear of COVID. We pray for Doctors, nurses, paramedics, cleaners, and all the people who work to keep us fed and to keep us healthy. We pray for countries with poor medical services. We pray for richer countries to share vaccines, because we are only safe from this, if we are all safe. Even in this time there is still fighting and wars. We pray for the men, women and children of Afghanistan, and pray that those who must now make a new life find peace, security and a welcome.

God of all things great and small.

We pray, not only with words, but life is a living prayer. We breathe, our very breath takes in part of your creation, and we celebrate the glory of God.

We pray these things, spoken and unspoken, in the name of Jesus, who walks with us.  
Amen

## Notices

Saide

Good morning on this third Sunday of the Season of Creation. It's great to see the commitments being added to our Community Action graph. There's lots of fantastic ideas being shared on the graph. If you haven't had a look yet please do. Be inspired and take up a new commitment. Send Kate an email and tell her about commitments you have already made and anything new you have been inspired to commit to. We are already up to BUC rocks for Food and Consumption and well on the way there with Energy Consumption as well. It will be great to see the graph continuing to grow.

The Climate Action News section of the Olive Press offers resources from the Assembly for taking action on climate change and a story about the letters we wrote to the Prime Minister being delivered.

With school holidays upon us and still limited in what we can do and where we can go this could be a great time to consider creating something for the Emergence exhibition. We're looking forward to receiving submissions from people of all ages. Submissions are due by mid-October. The BUC Arts committee is planning for in-person and virtual exhibitions and performances.

The discernment process responding to the recent Food Co-op Review is continuing with a meeting tomorrow night for Members and any other interested people.

Tim Winkler, former member of our congregation, is conducting the 5-yearly review of the Children, Youth and Young Adult ministry. An open Zoom session is being offered on 29<sup>th</sup> September at 7:30pm.

I'm creating the worship rosters for October and November. If you are a regular roster participant please respond to the reminder email I'll be sending out later today and if you want to find out about joining the roster just let me know.

Join Ian after worship for a zoom chat and come along to the Eco-theology conversation on Tuesday.

Contact information, times and any other details that you need for all the news are available in the Olive Press, on the Events Calendar and in the Our Stories section of the website.

Bye for now!

## **Sending Song**

I danced in the morning (TIS 242)

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*1. I danced in the morning when the world was begun,  
and I danced in the moon and the stars and the sun;  
and I came down from heaven and I danced on the earth,  
at Bethlehem I had my birth:*

*Dance then, where ever you may be;  
I am the Lord of the dance, said he;  
and I'll lead you all wherever you may be,  
and I'll lead you all in the dance, said he.*

*2. I danced for the scribe and the Pharisee,  
but they would not dance and they wouldn't follow me.  
I danced for the fishermen, for James and John,  
they came with me and the dance went on:*

*3. I danced on the Sabbath and I cured the lame:  
the holy people said it was a shame.  
They whipped and they stripped and they hung me high,  
and they left me there on a cross to die:*

*4. I danced on a Friday when the sky turned black;  
it's hard to dance with the devil on your back.  
They buried my body and they thought I'd gone;  
but I am the dance and I still go on:*

*5. They cut me down and I leap up high,  
I am the life that'll never, never die;  
I'll live in you as you live in me:  
I am the Lord of the dance, said he:*

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## Blessing and Sending

Let us hear the heavens tell of God's glory  
Let us look with open hearts and fresh eyes for the voice of God in our midst  
Let us know the presence of God as the sky shapes our every day.

Go now in peace with the blessing of the Holy One,  
Source, Word and Breath of life in Creation.  
In the name of Christ. Amen

## Thank you

Liturgist:  
Kirsty Bennett

Acknowledgement of  
Country:  
Claire Foley

Bible readers:  
Ralph Eduardo  
Maxine Loynd

Children's time:  
Susannah Denholm  
Dave Hall  
(Pastor: Children, Youth  
and Young Adults)

Reflection:  
Graeme Garret  
(Minister of the Word)

Prayers of the People:  
Helen Burnham

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Ian Ferguson  
Alistair Hunter  
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Elaine Potter  
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Notices:  
Saide Cameron

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Kirsty Bennett (Prayers of  
Adoration and Confession)  
Ray Cameron  
(Bible readings)  
Ian Ferguson (Reflection  
+ Stock sky photos)

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## Closing verse

'The heavens are telling the story of God' Psalm 19:1