

Note

Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios I proclaimed 1 September as a day of prayer for creation for the Orthodox in 1989; the Orthodox Church year starts on that day with a commemoration of how God created the world. The World Council of Churches was instrumental in making this special day a season, extending the celebration from 1 September until 4 October – the Feast of St Francis of Assisi. Christians worldwide have embraced the season as part of their annual calendar. Pope Francis made the Roman Catholic Church's warm welcoming of the season official in 2015. Throughout the month-long celebration, the world's 2.2 billion Christians come together to care for our common home.

Our readings this week are full of the implications for people of faith living in times of injustice – including the injustice that the climate crisis brings. All our God-given gifts of alertness, craftiness, and readiness to act are called for. Creationtide challenges us to combine the gifts of the prophet Jeremiah – called to tell the truth to an elite not wishing to hear – and Barnabus in Acts 4 who had the gift of encouragement. We need to tell the truth compellingly that people take what action they can before too many tipping points are passed.

Call to Worship

Creator God, of justice **You are with us now**
Bright God of change **You will walk beside us**
Dark God of comfort **You will see us through**
Rainbow God of life **We will follow you!**

ECS staff

Prayers of Approach & Confession

When we are wandering, lacking direction, down on our luck, far from the coast;
when we've been pushed to uncertain surroundings,
tossed by the whim of the way things turn out,
then, in the emptiness, life looks us eye to eye.
Then, though we still might attend to the lies that lead out.
Then, though confronted by impossible outcomes.
God will be with us
God will be with us
God will be with us

Whatever they say.

God in love with flesh and blood yet testing and trying,
we bring you out efforts and failures;
the things which just went wrong and harm we went ahead and chose.
We bring to you in openness, the damage to fellow creatures
for which we share responsibility.
And those times when we forgot how you value and can use each seed,
each prayer, each decision made in love.
We bring you bitterness, which is always a choice
and ask for your help with letting go of it
and of everything we should cling to no longer.
We come to you for healing, forgiveness and hope,
and in silence wait on what cannot be taken for granted
but what is granted nonetheless to set us free for joy and service in this world you love.
As forgiven people, then, and as those on the way, we pray in the way you taught us...

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Or

Lord God, Jesus Christ, Holy Spirit
we heartily thank you for your extravagant gifts of Creation.
Forgive us, Lord, for the harm that we cause to the Land, Sea, and Sky, and, therefore,
to our brothers and sisters throughout the world.
Please give us the will, faith and creativity
to play our part in making your world a better place for all to live in safety,
with our fair share of the Earth's resources,
freely given by you for the benefit of all, equally. Amen.

Kath Aitken, Dunscore Parish Church

Or

Awesome God,
when we consider your creating power, we stand amazed.
You spoke, and worlds came into being:
 the star-spangled universe,
 the beautiful green-blue earth,
 the expanse of the heavens,
stretching beyond our imagination
the abundance of nature on land and in seas,
from the tiniest insect to the great beasts
that dwell in forest and savanna,
from minnows to the great whales that frolic in the seas,
everyone the work of your hands.

Awesome God

when we consider that out of dust

you created human beings, we stand amazed.

Flesh and bone, muscle and sinew, life and breath, all working in harmony;
each unique and precious, the same yet different, gloriously diverse.

Awesome God,

we barely dare to stand before you -

you who are both mystery and yet present with us.

And yet you call us to you.

You open your arms to greet us.

In Jesus you share our lives;

our sorrows and joys,

our disappointments and anxieties,

our hopes and dreams.

Awesome God,

we respond to your call and come to worship you.

And even as we sing your praise

and reflect on your goodness

we are aware of our own shortcomings and failures.

Though we seek to follow Jesus, we often give up when the path is hard,

We follow our own desires instead of listening to your voice.

We harden our hearts to the needs of others and put ourselves first.

We bring to you what we would have you change in us

Silence is kept

Awesome God,

love is your nature and forgiveness freely given.

Renew and restore us to live your ways and be your people Amen.

With thanksgiving we accept your mercy and grace,

newness of life and endless fresh beginnings.

Gracious God let us trust in your words of healing and life.

For as high as the heavens are above the earth,

so great is Your love for those who fear You;

as far as the east is from the west,

so far have You removed our transgressions from us. Amen

URC Worship Notes

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Thanks be to you our God,

for the opportunity to live lovingly this day,

through your cycles of life and of goodness;

our hearts are uplifted in gratitude
to know that when we open our lips to praise you,
we do so with every creature who breathes in
what the trees and green things breathe out.
We thank you for a faith which makes all the more sense
in our growing awareness of crisis and need,
and of our complete interdependence
in the web of life in which we weave our thread.
From the worms to the whales;
from the microbes that break down dead things to feed the flowers;
to the billions of cells which make each one of us who we are:
thank-you God for life, and hope, and the prayers of your Church
through which we are not abandoned to despair,
but gathered in, by grace through Christ, the Word made flesh and blood and love,
Amen

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Prayer for Illumination

Open your Word to us, O God,
as we listen to Scripture and introduction,
proclamation and challenge,
words - ancient and modern,
that in our hearing and thinking,
our reflecting and resolving,
we may see how to change our world. Amen.

Andy Braunston

Readings

*Jeremiah 32 1: 3a; 6-15 & Psalm 91: 1-6, 14 – 16 or Amos 6: 1a, 4-7 & Psalm 146
1 Timothy 6: 6 – 19 | St Luke 16: 19-31*

Notes on the Readings

Jeremiah 32

Despite his 'Prophet of Doom' credentials, Jeremiah expresses a sacrificially rebellious hope by investing in a far from certain future. Though the cultural milieu is so different from our own that we need to read with great care. In particular, be wary of equivalence in notions of property, and the extent to which, in our time and place, land may simply be disposed of as if the land had no say in the matter. Are we nonetheless prepared to learn from Jeremiah's example to model a better and more sustainable life in the choices we make with the resources in our hands? Even the replacement home or church boiler? If

you've got gas or oil, though superficially, it looks cheaper, how much sense does it make, morally, or financially even in the medium term, to tie yourself into further dependence on fossil fuels. (If, that is, you live in a location where there is genuine choice.)

Jeremiah's act is quite comparable with those who wisely, if sacrificially, bypass the gradualism which - even in a time of crisis - still masquerades as wisdom. For instance, replacing 'like for like' whilst wondering why 'net-zero' looks so hard. How interesting is it too, that Jeremiah feels called to buy the "right to use" the land following meticulously the existing laws and processes of his people? Does this assert the need for justice in our dealings with the land, as well as with people? Admittedly, Jeremiah can also be really obscure, but just under the surface, there are also some gems we can pick up and run with. The Jewish 'rights of redemption' presuppose that the 'land' can never truly be 'private property' as we would think of it; the ancestral rights to land which is 'sold' should have been returned to those exercising what might today be thought of as 'indigenous' rights. This would be a God given partnership relationship of specific benefit to people, livestock, "land-self" and the wildlife to whom land is also given as a habitat. (cf Leviticus 25) The sabbath - a fallow seventh year after six of sowing and reaping, as well as the 'jubilee' - the fiftieth year and therefore the 'sabbath of sabbaths' is not only in recognition that the Earth belongs to God, but also that the land, in person, needs space and time to recover from what is being demanded by human exploitation - even the basic exploitation involved in growing food and providing shelter for human beings. Science happily supports what ancient religious regulations stipulate.

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Psalms 91

Don't fall for the initial impression of a naive "everything's going to be all right" poem, though some of the comfort it offers does seem to be wishful thinking. God is "with us in trouble" (verse 15). And the trouble is there with or without our relationship with God. None of the dangers and threats are abolished by the prayer of the Psalmist, but all of them are better faced, and maybe some escaped, though the spiritual resilience of faith in God. We do not fix the world by changing a light-bulb, but the prayer which such small actions represent, better prepares us to face what lies ahead.

There are some rather lovely images of God here, in particular that of a mother bird (perhaps an eagle?) sheltering her vulnerable young under her wings. There's also reassurance for protection against shame and humiliation, which are such devastating prospects throughout the Psalms. Faith builds the confidence we need, even in the face of threat, to stand up to what assails us.

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Amos

The Dunscore Congregation put things bluntly and with humour: [please do view the video](#), whether or not you use it in worship. Self-deception and detachment from the costly

realities which underly extravagant affluence are the thin veil which makes possible the ultimately unsustainable 'revelry of the loungers'. Their excessive comfort is at the cost of their fellow creatures - human and otherwise. Think of the 'lounges' in airports (what a temple of consumerism and pollution) all presented as glamour and status! But the prophet introduces the unsettling vision that things will catch up with those who so disregard their responsibility and dependence on those whom they share the land. The mention of 'David' as the harpist of psalms (perhaps alluding to his entertainment of Saul?) reminds us that our faith can also appear to be practised in alienation from the needs and realities of Earth and those who live more directly in relationship with Earth. On a tour of Mount Stuart (just one of the several intoxicatingly grand mansions of the Marquess of Bute), paid for, effectively, by the blood of the workers in his coalmines, I was told, in the fantasy chapel, that he was "very religious". The God Amos speaks for would disagree. Nor is it just the super-rich who might have pause for thought. According to Ruth Valerio of Tearfund, six days of consumption for a person in the UK has the same impact on the environment as a year for someone in Malawi. Considering the huge changes in climate, and the rise in sea-levels, authoritatively expected even by 2030, whom does a consumer lifestyle - oblivious to poverty and climate - most endanger? Can we find happiness in a different direction? Reward in living responsibly, and with special allowance for those - perhaps in our island communities - who have no choice, for now, but to depend on lifeline fossil fuel vehicles? Transition is a must, but transition must be just, not 'leaving anyone behind'.

David Coleman

Psalm 146

If you want to find God look down, rather than up! And there's real sustaining joy built in to praising a God who's so conspicuously worthy of that praise, through solidarity, above all, with creatures in most need. Those whose credentials as guardians of justice marry together with those of the Creator of "heaven and earth, the seas, and all that is in them." Even though that outstanding need, prohibiting complacency, continues to challenge our faithfulness. The first reaction of many Christians to the crushing realisation of the state of the planet is often lament - a response in the stable of grief and bereavement. And yet, given the firm prospect of the impact of rising sea levels and more throughout our lifetimes, let alone a 50% likelihood of reaching that crucial maximum upper limit of global warming of 1.5 degrees in the next five years, is this the only story? We need our faith to sustain us long-term, and a life lived only in lament seems a grim prospect. Movements for racial and other liberation have a different resource: the joyful and defiant claim to hope beyond hope: the spirituality of 'Hallelujah anyway', not requiring the permission of a rational pathway to that hope, which faith, nonetheless supplies. The cyclic aspect of nature is taken as read: cycles of water, carbon, and nutrients participate in God's triumph over vain aspirations to permanence and absolute power by human rulers who, like every other creature 'return to dust'. A befriending of mortality is the beginning of a closer walk with God. If you refuse to acknowledge threat, you'll blunder into it. As to the aspirations of humanity to dominate and control, the ancient wisdom of the Psalmist is content to dismiss such things. Finally, if you really want something to challenge a congregation: -

given that even the most conscientious translators translate into the English they think they ought to, there's an unexpected wariness to embrace. This insight is a fruit of our currently renewed awareness of the fragility of Creation as a whole. Even the aspects of Creation to whose resilience Scripture likes to appeal, are objectively endangered. Always be wary of claims to open-ended "endlessness" or 'forever'. (Verse 5b). An awareness of endings, even the endings of ages, saves us from the complacency of sitting back and neglecting the activism and engagement to which God calls all faithful people, according to their opportunity and ability. 'Open-ended endlessness, especially the 'endless growth' of the throwaway single-use economy, surreptitiously works its way into our reading of Scripture. "Throughout all generations" is one thing, but "forever", come what may, is something else. There is more work to be done, and we need both prayerful and scholarly input, but only God is forever.

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I Timothy

The letter to Timothy is extraordinarily challenging, both to its recipient and to his community. Do we underestimate the courage shown here in rattling the cages of the rich and privileged? Even calling out the sometimes undue influence of those charged with managing the financial assets of our churches? Yet they act with conscientious devotion too managing gifts for the good of the church. In my first pastorate, the treasurer insisted on publishing in the annual report, the individual contributions of church members, which sadly reinforced the inequality of influence within a particular congregation. "We have to do it, or people won't give" was the explanation. When a full meeting of the church opted for confidentiality, giving actually rose. Green Christian's '[Joy in enough](#)' project offers resources to investigate the wonderful freedom from the compulsion to pile up possessions and riches. As a local pastor, I sometimes prayed to be delivered from the woes of the rich! And yet there is such power exercised by public opinion, and every aspect of the media, to keep us under the thumb of the idolatry of 'only more is better' distorting even our perception of God. 'Eternal' life ends up as defined only as 'endless' rather than, primarily, a participation, within this present age, in God's care for the World. And if or when we do find ourselves well off: what a lovely opportunity to do good. Globally, however, wealth demonstrably goes together with an extreme environmental impact. It's not always possible to pile up and hold on to "unjust wealth" in order to use it for good. Or do you have credible examples to the contrary?

David Coleman

St Luke

A millionaire film star slaps another, and we know his name, a billionaire buys up Twitter – we know his name. The names of those threatened by starvation as crops fail in Northern Kenya, those who lost their homes in Madagascar two years in succession from hurricanes super charged by warming oceans – their names we do not know. The story of Lazarus and the rich man turns our reality upside down. Lazarus has a name. In all of

Jesus' parables he is the only person that Jesus names. Lazarus lives at the gate of the unnamed rich man, hungry, ragged and sick. The rich man cannot say that he did not know. He knows the words of the prophets about poverty and injustice; he knows that he is a descendant of Abraham. And yet day in and day out he walks past his suffering neighbour. We cannot say that we do not know about climate change, we have constant feeds on our social media and yet we do nothing. The science is clear, we have to make sacrificial changes to our lifestyles, to our countries' policies. Our neighbour has a name – My neighbour is called Nonhlanhla she lives in Durban; she went to study at university and couldn't afford the residence fees so stayed in a shack with a family member. They couldn't find land so built on the banks of the river. Just before Easter a year's worth of rain fell in two days. Durban was hit by a rain bomb. Her home was washed away, she drowned in a wall of mud. Who is your global neighbour, what is their name?

*The Revd Canon Dr Rachel Mash,
Environmental Coordinator at
The Anglican Church of Southern Africa*

Affirmation of Faith

We believe that God created the world
and it is good.

We believe that God created us
to live in harmony with nature.

We believe that human selfishness and greed
are changing our climate, heating the earth,
and endangering all living things.

We believe as temperatures and sea levels rise
we have to change our attitudes, lifestyles, economies, and politics,
and adapt to all that is to come.

We believe we can live as the Creator intended,
through the sacrificial example of Jesus Christ,
in the power of the Holy Spirit,
so that our world may not end. Amen

Andy Braunston

Intercessions

Sustaining God, Incarnate in the Earth, Wild Wind of life
may we praise you with all that we are.

May we be Good News for Creation
in the obedient reshaping of all that we have and do for your glory.

Expose the pride in humility's clothing
of sitting back as if we could do nothing
and the folly disguised as wisdom
of delay, and 'bit by bit'.

May our work and worship join hands
and shamelessly uncover the impact of what we still need to do
whilst striving to balance and heal the harm so unjustly distributed.

May we outdo one another in showing honour to the Earth!
May we look not only for savings in carbon emissions 'on paper'
but see within it beauty, integrity and a betterment of life for people and planet.
May we honour the wildlife and all the creatures
to whom God also gives the Earth as habitat and home.

Help us to see Net-Zero as the end of excuses and exceptions,
and recognise it brings repentance and acceptance of responsibility
for damage to Earth's life.

Dear God, who loves the Earth
remind us of our responsibilities in the rainbow of your Covenant;
may Sun and Rain each day proclaim the scope of this ambition,
the daunting height of hills we need to climb
but more, the grace on which our life is founded.
Help us to look forward with joy and hope
to the day when we surmount that summit
and glimpse with awe, delighted, the way ahead
Amen

Sending and Blessing

May we speak to the Earth to be taught of Your goodness, O Maker
and the fish in the sea to be schooled of Your wisdom, Lord Jesus.
As the birds make sky heaven so may we live for justice,
as Good News for every good creature You love, Most Holy Spirit.
Remind us, O Trinity of Love, that the creatures needs us as we need them. Amen.

Now may the God of justice
the Sustainer, the Beloved made flesh, the Reshaper
bless you with courage, faith and cheerfulness,
to get on with it. Amen!

Or

May the One whose glory is reflected in Creation,
the One who calls us to be made well,
the One who gives us the power to change,
enable you to see, in creation's mirror, the majesty of God,
assist you to be made well,
and empower you to be the change the world needs,
and the blessing of Almighty God,

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, *or* Eternal Majesty, Enfleshed Word, Divine Spirit
be with you now and always, Amen.

Andy Braunston

| Hymn Suggestions of General Creation Themes <i>See general Worship Notes for other thematic material</i> | | | | |
|--|-----|-----|-----|------|
| | RS | CH4 | StF | MP |
| All Creatures of Our God and King | 39 | 147 | 99 | 7 |
| Sing for God's Glory That Colours the Dawn of Creation | | 172 | 116 | |
| God of Wonders | | | | 1089 |
| Uyai mose / Come All You People | | 757 | 22 | |
| Nourished by the rainfall | | 138 | | |
| Where are the voices for the earth | | 244 | | |
| God who made the earth | | 228 | | |
| How Great Thou Art | 117 | 154 | 82 | 506 |
| Creation Sings the Father's Song | | | | 1268 |
| As if you were not there | | | 724 | |
| As the glory of creation | | | 725 | |
| Come to us creative Spirit | | 612 | 726 | |
| Touch the Earth Lightly | | 243 | 729 | |
| We follow the Lord along the gradual road to heaven | | | 730 | |
| When in our music God is glorified | 414 | 203 | 731 | |
| Beauty for brokenness | | 259 | 693 | 806 |
| Lord bring the day to pass (to Love Unknown as in CH4) | 87 | 238 | | |
| Isaiah the Prophet has written of old | | 241 | | |
| Is This The Way You Made The World | | 242 | | |
| Great God of every Shining Constellation | | 246 | | |

RS – *Rejoice & Sing* | CH4 – *Church Hymnary 4* | StF – *Singing the Faith* | MP – *Mission Praise*