

# **Worship for the Season of Creation**

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Suggestions from the Revd Canon Peter Babington, Chair of the Liturgical Advisory Group and  
Vicar of Bournville

## **Introductory Reflection**

The present and deepening environmental crisis is not just a technical, scientific or economic problem; is a spiritual one. As an issue it touches questions of vision, motivation, hope, challenge, as well as ethical action and how to sustain it. It concerns our whole being: body, mind and spirit; heart, hands and soul. It makes us face up to the shadow side of our human nature: sin, selfishness, separation. Taking environmental issues seriously often raises emotions of anger, fear and guilt. All these things need to be converted and transformed; to be redeemed into commitment and action for good. It is in acts of worship that Christians most often come together. Worship is one of the key places in which communities of faith will address, learn about and respond to environmental concerns.

This is not just about coming to worship: we all go out from worship too! Putting it more actively, we are all sent out from worship. As the liturgical text puts it, we “go in peace to love and serve the Lord.” We are sent out as ordinary people, who lead everyday lives, using what power and influence we have, acting in new ways to make a difference in the world.

## Planning Worship with an Environmental Theme

There are many liturgical resources available online and in prayer books. Sometimes it can feel there are too many and it is hard to know how and when to use them... (see page 3 below)

A great opportunity to explore worship on environmental themes is **The Season of Creation** from **1<sup>st</sup> September – 4<sup>th</sup> October (SeasonofCreation.org)**

The Season of Creation is a time when Christians around the world pray and act together to protect creation. The season is an ecumenical effort, coordinated by the Global Catholic Climate Movement, World Council of Churches, the Anglican Communion Environmental Network, the Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network, ACT Alliance and Christian Aid. The 2018 theme is 'Walking Together' – the season is a shared journey to better care for creation

[The ecumenical website is SeasonofCreation.org. Go to the *Resources* tab and within that *Denominational Resources*. See especially: an ecumenical prayer service for the Season of Creation: see the pray and worship section of the Season of Creation website and/or resource booklet.]

**What is worship?** Worship is... (for reflection, see page 4 below)

**A Model for Planning worship:** G.O.P.I.A. (with acknowledgement to Gary O'Neill)

Givens / Opportunities / Purpose / Image / Action

First discuss the givens and opportunities that are the context for your act of worship: it is vital to set the scene and be clear about the who, how, what, where and when details...

Then the crucial and often hardest stage is to work out the why: what is the purpose of this act of worship? After discussing it, write it down as a purpose statement. This is helpful when later choosing what texts or songs to include.

Can the purpose of the worship be expressed in terms of an image (not necessarily visual, but imaginatively and metaphorically)?

Then turn the image into an action. The action will be at the heart of the act of worship with the texts and songs framing it.

**Purpose: for worship during the Season of Creation: we join together...**

- To rejoice in the good gift of creation
- To reflect on how we care for creation
- To contemplate the fabric of life into which we are woven
- To hear the call to witness to our faith
- To be inspired to take bold action to preserve the gift we share
- To ask: do our actions honour the Lord as Creator?
- To ask: are there ways to deepen our faith by protecting "the least of these", who are most vulnerable to the consequences of environmental degradation?
- To gain fresh perspectives
- To deepen bonds of love...

(For example, imagine how different your church's Harvest service might be if you have planned it with the purpose in mind of people leaving the church feeling inspired to bold action, rather than with the main aim of rejoicing in the good gift of creation... it could have a very different feel!)

### **Online Liturgical Resources**

The Anglican Communion Environmental Network:

<http://acen.anglicancommunion.org/resources/season-of-creation.aspx>

A Rocha (Eco Church): A wealth of resources available including: – **service orders** (adult, all-age, interactive), **sermon materials**, **Bible study notes**, **suggested songs and hymns**, **prayers** and **materials for children's groups**. [arocha.org.uk](http://arocha.org.uk) Go to the *Resources* tab and click on *ideas for worship*

Connected with the Season of Creation: [livingthechange.net](http://livingthechange.net)

### **Church of England:**

Seasons and Festivals of the agricultural year e.g. Harvest

<https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/worship-texts-and-resources/common-worship/churches-year/times-and-seasons/agricultural-year>

The CofE have now put all the *Creationtide* Resources in one handy place on-line:

<https://creationtide.com/>

### **Other resources for Eucharistic Liturgies:**

<https://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk/green-communion-2018/>

### **Lists of Creation-Centred hymns:**

<https://www.interfaithpowerandlight.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/11/Creation-Centered-Hymns.pdf>

Also see A Rocha resources such as : What a Wildly Wonderful World: A Rocha 2010 Environment Resource Pack (<http://arocha.org.uk/resources/environment-resource-packs/>). It can be found under the heading of: what's so wonderful about the world?

The downloaded resource includes a long list of hymns not included with the online version.

Another musical resource that I use often are the songs of Fischy Music: [fischy.com](http://fischy.com)  
e.g. The wonder of these days, Music Maker

## **What is worship?** (from the CofE's *New Patterns for Worship*)

Try completing the sentence, 'Worship is...' Yes, it is giving God his worth, or what he deserves, or glory. 'The true end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him for ever', as Christians said in the seventeenth century. But explore the mechanics of that a bit more: do any of the following paragraphs get near our experience?

Worship is a door open in heaven. We lift up our hearts, listen in to what God is saying, join the angels and archangels and all the saints in heaven in praising God's eternal holiness. We are there and he is here.

Worship is a door open to the inner depths of life. Suddenly, as we worship, there is wholeness, *shalom*, peace, as all the fragmented bits of our being are put into God's perspective. Things make sense, and there is something to hold on to which has hitherto seemed just beyond the grasp of our mind.

Worship is a door open to the rhythms of life. Through festivals, simple rituals, a weekly rhythm, worship marking morning and evening, the whole of life, time and space is claimed for God and given back to him. In the worship he gives it to us again, to use for him, and we know he is concerned with our hopes and fears, politics and problems, families and finance.

Worship is a door to our hearts open in obedience to God. He commands us to worship in spirit and in truth. We respond to the overwhelming majesty of his beauty revealed in creation, to his overwhelming love and grace revealed in his word and in his Son. And as we worship, we are changed...

## Prayer

One: We pray in thanksgiving for Mother earth in whom all life is rooted, Brother Sun whose energy radiates life, Sister Water who nurtures and revives us, and co-creatures with whom we live, and for whom we are called to till and keep this garden. “All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe and in the smallest of your creatures. You embrace with your tenderness all that exists. Pour out upon us the power of your love, that we may protect life and beauty. Fill us with peace, that we may live as brothers and sisters, harming no one. Creative Spirit,

**Many: enlighten our hearts and remain with your world.**

One: O God of the poor, help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth, so precious in your eyes. Bring healing to our lives, that we may protect the world and not prey on it, that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction. Touch the hearts of those who look only for gain at the expense of the poor and the earth. Creative Spirit,

**Many: enlighten our hearts and remain with your world.**

One: Teach us to discover the worth of each thing, to be filled with awe and contemplation, to recognize that we are profoundly united with every creature as we journey towards your infinite light. Creative Spirit,

**Many: enlighten our hearts and remain with your world.**

One: We thank you for being with us each day. Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle for justice, love and peace.” Creative Spirit,

**Many: enlighten our hearts and remain with your world. Amen.**

*(adapted from A prayer for the Earth, Pope Francis, Laudato Si)*