



Order of Service for
Sunday 12th September 2021

WELCOME

CALL TO WORSHIP

Come and celebrate our common home

we gather with the family of humanity.

The mountains, islands and desert

we honour the glory of God in creation.

The lakes, rivers and seas

we come to the source of living water.

With the land, its soil, seeds and sustenance

we give thanks for God's generous provision.

With the forests of great trees, the lungs of the planet

we will sing with joy and clap our hands.

We join with the whole of creation,

inspired by those who have gone before and the prophetic voices of today.

We dare to praise and pray for another possible world. Amen

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF FIRST PEOPLES

We gather in acknowledgement of the Yorta Yorta nation, the first inhabitants of this place who dwelt here and cared for it of old.

We gather attentive to their wisdom of living in harmony with the land, and in commitment to the ongoing journey of reconciliation between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians.

HYMN TiS 107 Sing praise and thanksgiving

Introduction to Seasons of Creation - *Humanity*

Psalm 8

Divine Majesty and Human Dignity

- ¹ O LORD, our Sovereign,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!
You have set your glory above the heavens.
- ² Out of the mouths of babes and infants
you have founded a bulwark because of your foes,
to silence the enemy and the avenger.
- ³ When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars that you have established;
- ⁴ *what are human beings that you are mindful of them,
mortals that you care for them?*



- ⁵ Yet you have made them a little lower than God,
and crowned them with glory and honour.
- ⁶ You have given them dominion over the works of your hands;
you have put all things under their feet,
- ⁷ all sheep and oxen,
and also the beasts of the field,
- ⁸ *the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea,*
whatever passes along the paths of the seas.
- ⁹ **O LORD, our Sovereign,**
how majestic is your name in all the earth!

Prayer of Adoration

God of creation and joy,
in whose world we find ourselves overwhelmed by the diversity and wonder,
we approach you as your kin, part of your creation,
intimately linked with all we see around us
and knowing that our future is tied to the future of this planet.
The great storytellers of the past reflected on your spirit of creativity,
day by day, seeing that it was good, very good,
and we rest ourselves in that same knowledge: that we are also part of that story.
May we take up the responsibilities with which you have blessed us,
and in the living out of those responsibilities glorify your creative urgency
for the sake of all.
Amen.

Prayer Of Lamentation

What have we done, Lord?
How did we not realise our impact?
Whose voices did we fail to heed?
Why did we let our greed take over?
Where are people suffering today?

Fires destroying towns amidst parched forests; hurricanes fuelled by warm ocean waters;
smog trapped cities; rising sea levels; global temperatures breaking records;
politicians floundering; decisions delayed; deadlines coming and going;

and the echo of your voice
to be stewards responsible for it all do not go away.
What can we do, Lord?

AN EARLY WORD – A New World

HYMN TiS 146 God who made the earth



BIBLE READINGS:

Genesis 1:26-28

Mark 10:42-45

REFLECTION

My husband Don and I spend some of our time in the evenings watching television, and when there's nothing distracting like the Olympics, our default position is the ABC. Recently I've found myself captivated by the Tuesday series "Back to Nature", taking strolls through some beautiful natural environments in our own country with the presenters.

I was interested to read something of the background to the series on the People and Parks Foundation website, one of the sponsors of the program. I quote: "For decades the science has been warning of dire consequences resulting from unsustainable human activity: in Australia, the climate has already warmed by over a degree since 1901, rainfall has decreased in many areas, and extreme weather events are increasing. With our world turned upside down, now more than ever there's a need to reconnect with the natural world with a renewed sense of appreciation and wonder. To embrace nature for its own sake, and for the real physical, mental and social health and wellbeing outcomes it provides us all.

Yet many people have tuned out. Some are too overwhelmed by the scale of the problem and have become despondent, while others are disengaged by partisan polarisation around the issue. This aligns with research that tells us people avoid what makes them feel sad, guilty, or fearful, or threatens their identity, values, and worldview.

At the same time, we're spending less time in nature than ever before in history, and more time indoors, sedentary and on screens. We know that time in nature is a strong predictor of wanting to protect it, so in losing our connection to nature we risk losing our desire to protect it.

What I've just quoted resonates strongly with the reason the church across the world has designated these Sundays in September as an opportunity to reflect on our relationship with the environment through the "Seasons of Creation" series.

The church has wrestled for centuries with that relationship, a struggle born from the first chapter of Genesis. In chronological order, God brought into being the day and night, water and sky, land and vegetation, sun, moon and stars, living sea, land and air creatures... "Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over "...all birds and animals and creeping things.

And there we have that word "dominion". It also appeared Psalm 8: *You have given them dominion over the works of your hand.* What does it mean to dominate over all living things?

Over the centuries humankind has taken this word literally, resulting in species extinction, land degradation and the climate chaos we see today.

There's another verse in Genesis – chapter 2, verse 15 - which gives an alternative perspective to our relationship with nature. In a different creation story, God forms man first, from the dust of the ground, breathing into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man becomes a living being. And then...

¹⁵ *The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it.*

In this story humankind is charged not with dominion over, but respect for the earth, to till and keep, to be a good steward, to live in harmony with all things.

When we turn to the New Testament we find Jesus reminding us that among the Romans of his day, the aspiration of leaders was to dominate and control, to have power over others. Jesus declares that his way is just the opposite. His followers are to serve rather than rule. The language used here reflects a reversal of the language in Genesis 1.26-28. Those who follow Christ are not rulers, but servants. And that is true for our relationships with creation and the creatures of Earth as well as our relationship with other



humans. In short, Jesus' words make it clear that the way of serving Earth (in Genesis 2.15) is more consistent with the way of the cross than the way of domination (in Genesis 1.26-28).

One of the aspects of the "Back to Nature" series which I've found enlightening has been the conversations along the way with First Nations people about their relationship to the land. I have been reminded afresh that First Nations peoples have a special relationship with the earth and all living things in it. This relationship is based on a profound spiritual connection to Mother Earth that guided indigenous peoples to practice reverence, humility and reciprocity. It is also based on subsistence needs and values extending back thousands of years. When hunting, gathering and fishing to secure food, everything was taken and used with the understanding that they took only what was needed, so that future generations would not be put in peril.

This relationship is what I would call serving the land and its people.

Dominion or servanthood? What is our relationship to creation?

I leave you with a challenging little video "She's alive ...beautiful... worth dying for" which concludes with a memorial to some of the many people who have died seeking to serve creation.

<https://youtu.be/nGeXdv-uPaw>

TiS 168 For the fruits of all creation

ANNOUNCEMENTS

DEDICATION OF OFFERING

Prayer of Intercession

Creator God, breath and source of life,
in love you called the world into being
and in grace you made us and call us your children.
We stand in awe of the wonder of your creation:
its beauty and wildness;
complexity and power;
resilience and fragility.

God of life,
you call us to be participants in the web and wellspring of life:
to be nurtured by the planet;
to be nurturing of the planet;
to cherish the world and all that lives.
But we have failed and creation groans under our weight.

God of grace, forgive us in our brokenness:
when we have taken too much from the earth;
when we have not spoken out against greed and destruction;
when we have allowed our most vulnerable neighbours to be harmed.
We seek courage and forgiveness to be made whole.

God of love,
we pray for those people, communities and nations



already suffering the devastating effects of climate change;
and we pray for the diversity of life on earth, so much of it already threatened by our actions.

God of hope, we pray for political leaders.
Bless them with wisdom and creativity,
and a shared vision of hope for all creation.
May they find the determination to take strong action to halt the destructive effects of climate change,
and the political will to act together for the common good

Creator God, we pray for us all,
that we might restore our relationships with each other and work together to heal the earth.
Renew us in your grace for the sake of your creation.

(Source: Uniting Justice)

We pray in the name of Jesus who taught us to pray, saying:

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*Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.*

TiS 137 For the beauty of the earth

Blessing

May God bless us with wonder at creation's glory.
May God bless us with fury at creation's spoiling.
May God bless us with courage at this critical hour.
And may the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
Rest upon us and on all creation,
This day and for the future to come. Amen.

