**Service for Climate Sunday**

**Sunday, 25 April 2021**

**Welcome (David)**

Hello, my name is David Watson and I bid you a warm welcome to our service this morning at Bamford Chapel and Norden United Reformed Church, Rochdale. We are one of the twelve churches that make up the Rochdale, Bury and North Manchester Churches Missional Partnership. We are celebrating this morning Climate Sunday and our service is being led by the Eco Group at our church. On their behalf I again say, Welcome.

**Introduction and call to worship (Kate)**

Our service today celebrates God’s Creation and challenges us to consider how we fit in this diverse and dynamic universe. We have assumed that we are in charge, that we are top dog, made in God’s image and therefore supreme. However, we have been shown to be negligent in our care, our pursuit of development and progress has made us greedy and selfish. We face a climate disaster and need to make changes, changes that begin here with us. We are called to treasure this beautiful creation and so as part of our mission this community have begun to consider the ecological impact we make. So, at the beginning of our journey of eco exploration today let us come to worship God.

**Call to worship**

In amazement and awe,

in wonder and celebration

we marvel at God’s mystery:

In God all things live and move and have being,

In God all things, live and move and express God’s divine artistry;

And so we join with creation

in the eternal song of worship and wonder…

**Hymn-(announced by David)** The words of our first hymn this morning may be new to you but I am sure that the tune will be familiar. We sing “God’s bountiful creation” to the tune of Oh Jesus I have Promised.

God’s bountiful creation,  
our hearts with wonder fill,  
held now in contemplation  
with mind and body still.  
Diversity of creatures,  
varieties of plants  
for our delight displayed here  
that we may be entranced.  
  
Among the host of creatures  
just who am I but one?  
Yet you and I together  
the world have overrun.  
We’ve stained its glorious beauty,  
good habitats are lost,  
exploited or polluted  
at devastating cost.

Our planet’s overheating  
through burning fossil fuels;  
all round the seas are rising  
from melting frozen jewels.  
Where will the plants and creatures  
find refuge to survive?

Without their diverse presence  
have we the will to thrive?

It’s not too late God shows us,  
and science also tells,  
to change our ways of living  
pollutants to dispel.  
Jesus, in mercy lead us  
consumers of excess  
from fouling our surroundings  
to making do with less.

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**Prayer: Thank you and Sorry (Linda)**

Oh Lord, you merely had to speak into the silence to create light brighter than a summer day. You only had to speak to create the sun, the moon, the dazzling stars, the blue sky, sea and land. You spoke and the birds sang, the bees buzzed, fish swam in the seas. You spoke and the blossoms appeared on trees, crops grew and animals came to life. Each creature, plant, flower and tree balanced against the next so that life would be abundant and sustainable. You saw that it was good. Then you created man as the steward of your creation. When we speak we create pollution, scorching and poisoning the fertile land and the air we breathe. We can only apologise in our small way. Let us hear your voice once more over the cacophony of our own destruction and greed. Teach us to care for your planet and your people, to bring it back to the perfect paradise you created. Amen

***Prayer for our Earth from Pope Francis Encyclical – a papal letter sent to all bishops of the Roman Catholic Church,***

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. 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 upon 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. 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. We thank you for being with us each day. Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle for justice, love and peace. Amen

**And now, let us say together the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples:**

Our Father who art in heaven

Hallowed be Thy name,

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done

On earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread

And forgive us our trespasses

As we forgive those who trespass against us.

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory.

Forever and ever.

Amen

**Children’s address (Jess)**

The Eco church team couldn’t take over the service for the week without giving you an Eco tip. Just one little thing you can do to play your part in helping our environment.

I’ve no doubt many of you may be busy sowing flower and veg seeds this month but what are you sowing them in? Reusing seed trays and plant pots each year that you already have is a great option but you may not have enough or let’s be honest, they do eventually reach the end of their usable life. Rather than going out and buying new plastic pots have you considered what you already have in your home that can be reused and repurposed?

Yogurt and cream pots come in a variety of shapes and sizes and are ideal. Just wash them out. You will need to poke some holes in to the bottom that’s simply to allow excess water to drain away after watering.

Another good one is your fruit punnet. They’ve already got holes in the bottom. Again, just fill them up with soil. These are particularly good for little people to sows seeds into especially given they are a little bit impatient waiting for things to grow as not only can they see what’s going on above the soil they can also see what’s going on, through the clear sides, below the soil.

One that I particularly like to use is empty food trays. Typically, they come with meat in them. Again, they come in a variety of shapes and sizes. You can leave them as they are to stand pots in for watering. Put the water in the tray itself and then the water is absorbed up through the holes you’ve made in you pots. Alternatively, you can use them as a seed tray. Poke some holes in the bottom, fill with soil and sow your seeds directly into the tray.

One thing you might find is you have a seed packet that tells you to place your seed trays or pots in to a propagator or sealed plastic bag after sowing your seeds. Forget that. You don’t need a plastic bag and you don’t need a fancy propagator. Coming back to your meat trays. Get two. Turn one upside down. Put it on top if the other and you’ve created a propagator. And even better it will fit onto your window sill. If you happen to have sown your seeds into a pot, don’t worry. Get an empty fizzy drinks bottle and cut it in half. Take the top half of your fizzy drinks bottle and slide it over your pot that creates a cloche. Again, rather like your propagator you’ve created a warm, humid environment the seed packet is recommending. Even better don't waste the bottom half of your bottle. Poke some holes in the bottom and you have another plant pot.

By far the best thing you can use instead of plastic is the modest toilet roll tube. Make four cuts equal distance apart at one end of the tube. With the four flaps you have created. Fold those flaps in tucking in the last flap to create a bottom to your pot. Fill it up with soil and sow your seeds into it. The cardboard is sturdy enough to hold its shape and with stand watering for several weeks while your seed germinates and your plant begins to grow. When the time comes you are ready to plant it out in the garden. Don’t worry about trying to get the plant out of the pot. This is biodegradable. Plant the whole thing into the ground as it is. The cardboard will breakdown over the course of the season. You’ll not even know it was there by the end of the season.

Well, that’s it from me. God Bless and happy gardening.

**Sketch (introduced by David):** We know that God created us and commissioned us to look after and care for his creation. Our drama group, Food for Thought, will help us to think about that commission through a sketch called, “Oh Planet in the Sun”

**Sketch summary:** Starting with Adam and Eve, the sketch takes us through humans’ failing to look after the planet (and even each other). Even God’s fresh starts with Noah and Jesus leaves Him(Her) wondering, “When will they learn?” It then brings us to our present times with issues like destruction of rainforests, plastic waste, excess energy use and sweatshops leaving God thinking, “Will they ever learn?”

**Hymn (announced by David):** Our second hymn is once again new words to the well-known tune. The words were written by one of our Eco Group, Cameron Baines: “All things bright and beautiful”

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| *Chorus: All things bright and beautiful,*  *All creatures great and small,*  *All things wise and wonderful,*  *The Lord God made them all.* | Verse 2. He made us all responsible,  To watch the world for him,  We used it only our way,  Which made things pretty grim |
| Verse 1. Each little flower that opens,  Each little bird that sings,  The sunset and the morning,  That brightens up the sky. | *Chorus. All things dark and gloomy,*  *Polluted air we breathe,*  *Mountains of our rubbish,*  *To someone else we leave.* |
| *Chorus: All things bright and beautiful,*  *All creatures great and small,*  *All things wise and wonderful,*  *The Lord God made them all.* | Verse 3. We have a chance to turnaround,  The mistakes that we have made,  Reduce, Reuse, Recycle,  Before it ids too late |

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| *Chorus. All things dark and gloomy,*  *Polluted air we breathe,*  *Mountains of our rubbish,*  *To someone else we leave.* | Verse 5. He gave us eyes to see them,  The wonders that He made,  Let us move to restore them,  For everyone to praise. |
| Verse 4. The change is ours to implement,  To right the wrong we’ve done,  To help repair the damage,  That’s caused by everyone. | *Chorus. All things bright and beautiful,*  *All creatures great and small,*  *All things wise and wonderful,*  *The Lord God made them all* |
| *Chorus. All things dark and gloomy,*  *Let’s bring the light back in,*  *Reduce all the rubbish,*  *so creation lives again*. | Words by Cameron Baines  Ccli 169737 Streaming Licence 595811 |

**Readings: Psalm 8 (Gillian)**

Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory  
in the heavens.2Through the praise of children and infants you have established a stronghold against your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger. 3When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, 4what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them?[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm%208&version=NIV#fen-NIV-14017c)] 5You have made them[[d](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm%208&version=NIV#fen-NIV-14018d)] a little lower than the angels[[e](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm%208&version=NIV#fen-NIV-14018e)]and crowned them[[f](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm%208&version=NIV#fen-NIV-14018f)] with glory and honor. 6You made them rulers over the works of your hands; you put everything under their[[g](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm%208&version=NIV#fen-NIV-14019g)] feet: 7all flocks and herds, and the animals of the wild, 8the birds in the sky, and the fish in the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas. 9Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth**!**

**Poem: ARK By Simon Armitage, Poet Laureate (read by Lesley)**

In 2019 Armitage wrote this poem to celebrate the launch of the new polar research ship, the RSS Sir David Attenborough:

They sent out a dove; it wobbled home,

Wings slicked in a rainbow of oil,

a sprig of tinsel snagged in its beak,

a yard of fishing-line binding its feet.

Bring back, bring back the leaf.

They sent out an arctic fox; it plodded the bays

of the northern fringe in muddy socks and a nylon cape.

Bring back, bring back the leaf.

Bring back the reed and the reef,

set the ice sheet back on its frozen plinth,

tuck the restless watercourse into its bed,

sit the glacier down on its highland throne,

put the snow cap back on the mountain peak.

Let the northern lights be the northern lights

not the alien glow over Glasgow or Leeds.

A camel capsized in a tropical flood.

Caimans dozed in Antarctic lakes.

Polymers rolled in the sturgeon’s blood.

Hippos wandered the housing estates.

Bring back, bring back the leaf.

Bring back the tusk and the horn unshorn.

Bring back the fern, the fish, the frond and the fowl,

the golden toad and the pygmy owl,

revisit the scene where swallowtails fly

through acres of unexhausted sky.

They sent out a boat.

Go little breaker, splinter the pack-ice and floes,

nose through the rafts and pads

of wrappers and bottles and nurdles and cans,

the bergs and atolls and islands and states

of plastic bags and micro-beads

and the forests of smoke.

Bring back, bring back the leaf,

Bring back the river and sea.

**Eco Church- What is it? (Addie & Barbara)**

We keep getting asked “What exactly is Eco Church?” Eco Church is an award scheme for churches who want to demonstrate that the gospel is good news for God’s earth.

A Rocha is a Christian charity working for the protection and restoration of the natural world. They help churches to work together to care for creation and believe that the gospel is about practical action as well as pious thought. Eco church was started and supported by A Rocha.

The Eco Church involves us in completing a survey in 5 Categories

* Worship and teaching
* Buildings
* Land
* Community and Global Engagement
* Lifestyle

The Eco Church organisation awards Bronze, Silver or Gold awards and we have recently gained the bronze award having achieved at least bronze in all 5 categories.

**Worship and Teaching:** We do well in this category having reached gold standard as climate and environmental issues are prayed for regularly in church services. As 5 Junior Church leaders and 4 members of the Messy Church team are involved in the Eco Church group many Junior Church lessons and Messy Church topics are about caring for God’s creation and of course this Climate Sunday service can become an annual event.

**Building:** This is the most difficult section for us as we have a listed building but we do have some insulation and double glazing and we do use compostable cups. We hope that, in the future, we can change to a green energy supplier and use eco-friendly cleaning products.

**Land:** Thanks to our Gardening and Monday gangs we are at silver level in this area. As well as much gardening going on every Monday morning we have a water butt and multiple compost heaps. Many families from the community have enjoyed exploring our grounds and running on our field and trying out Jane’s maze as part of the Easter trail.

**Community and Global engagement**

Christian Aid involvement, being a Fairtrade Church, twinned toilets and our annual project, particularly the Kiribati one, contribute to a silver level in this category. At Christmas we had a growing Christmas tree which members of the community added decorations too. Before we closed did you see the Junior Church notices reminding users of the premises to switch off the lights?

**Life Style:** Our Eco Church group works hard to encourage church members to live a more eco-friendly lifestyle. There is a monthly eco tip in our church magazine and also recipes which use in season locally grown vegetables. This is where we all come in!

Please support the group in our efforts to ensure we are all doing everything we possibly can to care for God’s creation.

**Hymn: Creation groans, a girl skips school by Rev Dr Graham Adams (announced by David)** We sing once again and by now I am sure that you are picking up the theme. New words to a well-known tune! Our hymn is “Creation groans, a girl skips school” to the tune of When I Survey the Wondrous Cross:

Creation groans, a girl skips school,

a movement swells, their voices join:

‘How dare you steal our future life

while other interests take your coin?’     (\*1)

We’ve hurt our home, its ice caps melt,

the oceans swell while forests burn.

How dare we hide in fairy tales                (\*2)

of constant growth and fail to learn.

We need to dream, but wide awake        (\*3)

to face the painful truth we’ve known:

the Earth laments as millions move

and reap a crisis we have sown.

My mind and eyes will spring with tears;

my faith, though just a mustard seed,

will join with yours to move this mount;

‘this world is God’s’ my guiding creed.

(\*1,2,3 – allusions to Greta Thunberg’s speech in US Congress, 17 Sep 2019)

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**Reflection – Our carbon footprint (Rebecca)**

The issue of Climate change can be extremely daunting and it’s hard to know where to start and it’s often easier to stick with what we know especially when we aren’t directly feeling the effects of climate change. However, you might find yourselves already helping complete strangers across the globe battle the effects of climate change through financial support to: our annual projects, Christian Aid, Fairtrade, Charities and fundraising appeals. Making changes in our own lives to reduce our carbon footprints +is no different to giving money. We do it because it is our responsibility as Christians to protect Gods creation and HIS children across the world and in the same way that ever £1 can mount up, every tonne of carbon saved builds up too.

Everyone has a carbon footprint, because everything we do, buy, eat and waste uses and gives off carbon in some way which is the main component of climate change. Therefore everyone can make changes to reduce their own personal carbon footprint for example: eating less red meat, buying things made in Britain, reducing your energy use at home, driving less, wasting less food, choosing things with less plastic, using eco-friendly cleaning products.

God never gives us challenges we can’t face, and we all have different roles to play in the climate crisis. Looking after the planet is a team effort, all we can do is make changes in each of our own lives. For some that might just be lifestyles at home, others might be able to change the way things are done at School, work, social groups, communities, politics, business and Church- which is how the Eco Group began.

God is the only one who knows the bigger picture, all we can ever do is follow his example and try to do right by the planet and our fellow man in whatever ways we are able and encourage others to do the same. As it was Earth Day on Thursday, to celebrate the glory of God’s creation let’s all try and make at least one change to improve our carbon footprint and protect HIS planet.

**Prayers of Intercession (Debbie)**

We now come to our prayers of intercession. After each prayer focus, please join in with the words: “**Hear our prayers Lord and help us be better stewards of Your gift of our world.**”

Dear Lord, we come to You in prayer, thanking You for Your creation, Your gift of our world. We pray for our precious world, asking that Your Kingdom in all its glory, concealed by the sin and destruction of mankind, be once again revealed in all its intended glory. Help us to continue to seek and embrace the solutions to the climate and environmental problems that our ailing planet is facing. Help each one of us to play our part in protecting and taking care of the beautiful creation you gifted us to be stewards of.

“**Hear our prayers Lord and help us be better stewards of Your gift of our world.**”

We pray that You will guide the governments and religious leaders of our world inspiring them to work together for the good of all mankind, by placing the protection and the survival of our beautiful world at the heart of their decision making. We pray that they will have a global mindset ensuring the resources of our world are shared equally and carefully by all and that they will act, with urgency, together to tackle the challenges facing our fragile planet.

“**Hear our prayers Lord and help us be better stewards of Your gift of our world.**”

We pray for the Church across the world and ask that it leads as a steward of Your creation in all that it does. We pray that our churches will be beacons of light reaching outwards; shining with Your light; penetrating the darkness of the world to share the gift of the Garden of Eden, the creation You said was good. We pray for initiatives such as the ECO Church programme that might help enlighten Your people in how they can help look after the gift of our planet and make it good again.

“**Hear our prayers Lord and help us be better stewards of Your gift of our world.**”

We pray for all those in need due to the impact of climate change and environmental issues such as pollution. We especially remember those living in poverty who find themselves impacted more by these issues and those who are environmental refugees, who find themselves displaced and experiencing homelessness due to severe climatic events which result from mankind’s abuse of the resources of our planet. Help each of us to contribute in whatever way we can in reducing mankind’s carbon footprint and help us all to do more to petition on behalf of those affected by our greed and misuse of the planet’s resources so that all people across the world would have their basic human rights met.

“**Hear our prayers Lord and help us be better stewards of Your gift of our world.**”

We pray for all those who are sick or dying as a result of our misuse of the resources of our world. We pray for all those who suffer from poor air quality due to pollution; for those who become ill because they do not have access to clean water; for those who are injured or killed in the ever growing number of severe climatic events (which are a direct result of climate change) and their aftermath when diseases such as cholera and dysentery take more lives.

“**Hear our prayers Lord and help us be better stewards of Your gift of our world.**”

We offer all these prayers Lord and those in our hearts in the name of our great intercessor, Your son, Jesus Christ, Your most precious gift to us. **AMEN.**

**Hymn: (announced by David)** Our final hymn also has unfamiliar words to a familiar tune: God the maker of our heavens to the tune of What a Friend we Have in Jesus.

God, the maker of the heavens  
And the planet that we share  
Show us how to live, like Jesus  
Lives of gratitude and care  
Make us mindful of the footprints  
From the lives that we pursue  
Make us partners in your mission  
You are making all things new

God, the gardener of Eden

Teach us how to tend this earth  
Learning from the changing seasons  
Times of fallow and new birth  
Lord have mercy when we're careless  
Rich resources we misuse  
Use our hands to heal creation  
You are making all things new

God of labour and vocation  
Lord of science, trade and art  
Take our efforts and our passions  
Make them mirrors of your heart  
Every habitat and creature  
Loved and valued, God, by you  
May our lives reveal your Kingdom  
You are making all things new.

**Blessing and Grace (Tricia)**

May we always walk gently upon the Earth, in right relationship, nurtured by your love, open to the wind of the Spirit, taking only what we need, always open to the needs of others, making choices that bring wellbeing, living with generosity, striving for justice, honouring all with reverence, reconciling and peace-making, mindful of those who will come after, recognising our proper place as part of your creation. Grant us the strength and courage, Lord, for such a radical transformation into your Kingdom. Amen.

And now, May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all. Amen.