

Winchester, Eastleigh & Romsey Circuit
SERVICE AT HOME – Sunday 15th October 2023

Prepared by the Revd Kate Cambridge

In Psalm 24 we are reminded that God is creator of all things and holds them in his care. The Psalmist writes: *The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it; for he has founded it on the seas, and established it on the rivers.*

During September, many churches across the world took part in a 'season of celebration', celebrating creation and considering our common call to care for it. Today I invite you to join in with this theme, as we wonder in God's creation and consider how we can protect and nurture it.

Our hymn reminds us of the beauty of God's world:

Listen, Read, Pray or Sing Along STF 102

[For the beauty of the earth - John Rutter, The Cambridge Singers, City of London Sinfonia](#)

For the beauty of the earth,
For the beauty of the skies,
For the love which from our birth
Over and around us lies:

*Lord of all, to thee we raise
This our joyful hymn of praise.*

For the beauty of each hour
Of the day and of the night,
Hill and vale, and tree and flower,
Sun and moon and stars of light:

For the joy of human love,
Brother, sister, parent, child,
Friends on earth, and friends above,
For all gentle thoughts and mild:

For each perfect gift of thine
To our race so freely given,
Graces human and divine,
Flowers of earth and buds of heaven:

(F. S. Pierpoint, 1835–1917, slightly altered)

Prayers Our prayers today are written by other people for the Season of Creation. Let us pray:

Creator God,

We acknowledge that as your handiwork,
we stand alongside all that you have made.
Trees and rivers, mountains and valleys,
soaring birds and scuttling creatures,
all are held within your care.

May we grow in our love and appreciation
for the fabulous variety around us;
and may our awe and wonder draw us closer
to the natural world, and through it to you,
the God of all things. We pray in Jesus name, Amen
Revd Cate Williams - Environment Officer, Gloucester Diocese

Eternal God,

whose Spirit moved over the face of the deep
bringing forth light and life;
by that same Spirit, renew your creation, and
restore your image in your people.

Turn us from careless tenants to faithful stewards,
that your threefold blessing of clean air, pure
water and rich earth, may be the inheritance of
everything that has the breath of life, and one
generation may proclaim to another the wonder of
your works; through Jesus Christ, your living Word,
in whom the fullness of your glory is revealed.

Amen. *Rt Revd Libby Lane - Bishop of Derby*

This year the season of celebration theme was 'let justice and peace flow'. Their symbol was a mighty river and comes from the following reading from the 8th century prophet Amos. Amos brought words of judgment to the people of Israel, who were living in a time of great prosperity and living comfortable lives. However, a storm was coming and they would soon be conquered and dominated by many great empires, beginning with Assyria and then Babylon. It was Amos' task to announce that the storm was about to strike and to explain why.

Read Amos 5.18-24

Amos said, 'Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.' Our gospel reading contains a parable which raises many questions about what is just and fair.

Read Matthew 20.1-16

Reflection

'Let justice well up like waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.' If you visit St Paul in the US, there is a synagogue facing the Mississippi River which has this Scripture passage written on the wall. Those who walk alongside that river can hardly miss the point – the prophet Amos called for justice and righteousness to roll through the land, just like the Mississippi river!

Amos spoke to a people who were neglecting justice and had come under God's judgment. God would not look on their worship, their religious festivals and sacrifices – in fact, he hated them. Life was good and God's people were outwardly religious and apparently respectable. But it doesn't require a very close reading of Amos to realise what was at issue here. Amos says that they sold the righteous for silver, the needy for a pair of sandals, they trampled the heads of the poor into the dust of the earth, taking from them their levies of grain, afflicting the righteous, taking a bribe and pushing aside the needy at the gate.

God rejected their worship because of their unjust lives - the way they treated the poor and the needy. Amos urged them to 'seek good and not evil, that you may live.' (5.14) – to 'hate evil and love good, and establish justice in the gate.' (5.15). His words echo across the centuries as a sombre warning to all who gather in worship and yet who neglect to act justly in their lives. What do these words say to us, as we worship in churches or in our homes? Do we neglect justice, turn away from the cause of the poor and benefit at the expense of others?

Methodist Conference this year adopted the report, 'A Justice Seeking Church'. The report came out of the 'Walking with Micah' project and reaffirms the Methodist Church's long-standing commitment to be a justice-seeking Church. It seeks to encourage and resource churches to work for justice. You can read the report [here](#).

One area highlighted in the report is the importance of climate justice – '*God desires the flourishing of creation and of human community within it.*' It contains a number of priorities for the

Methodist church, including that we enable '*a flourishing environment: right relationships between people, planet and God.*'

The Justice seeking church guide puts it this way. It says that we need to respect the delicate balance between creatures and the environment. Yet it also states, '*humanity is living beyond the fragile limits of our planet – of which the climate crisis is just one indicator. Environmental injustice impacts first and hardest on the poorest. Lifestyles of overconsumption and economic models that pursue growth regardless of ecological impacts place people already experiencing poverty in an increasingly worse situation.*'

In Amos' time the people he rebuked were building large houses, eating well and drinking fine wine, but did not recognise how the policies they adopted trampled on the heads of the poor. Today we are recognising more and more how those who have contributed least to the climate crisis are those who are paying the highest price. The Global North has been burning fossil fuels for power and manufacturing for centuries and we have become rich through these things. The Global South however, whose role in pollution and climate change has been so much less, and who are not so rich, are the ones who are suffering the most.

We don't have to look far to see the devastation climate change causes. Last year the floods in Pakistan covered one third of the country and over 1700 people died. In March more than half a million people were displaced when their homes were damaged by Cyclone Freddie. Experts say that climate change played a significant role in the recent flooding in the Libyan city of Derna which killed thousands of people.

In our gospel reading, those who complained about a lack of justice were paid the daily labourers wage for their work. Their issue was that those who had been hired later were also paid the daily wage. Those who cried out 'it's not fair' were not concerned about the needs of their fellow workers. They were quick to cry out for their own benefit.

How often is the same true for us – we see injustice too clearly when we feel that we are the ones who have been ill-treated. Are we so quick to speak up for injustice on behalf of others?

Much in the world is not fair. The devastating impact of climate change is felt most by poorer communities, who do not have the money to repair the damage or build the infrastructure which would help protect them from the worst impacts. Many people are displaced by the climate crisis and driven from their homes to become what some call 'climate refugees' – dependent on the compassion and open to the judgment of those more fortunate. This *really* is not fair.

'The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it.' How are we to value and respect the earth and fight against climate change? And how can we ensure justice for those who pay the highest price?

The Methodist Church is seeking to work against climate change in its commitment to become a net zero carbon emissions church by 2030.

[Net Zero Carbon \(methodist.org.uk\)](https://www.methodist.org.uk)

In this Circuit, Romsey Methodist church have led the way in becoming a Gold Eco church. Our churches are encouraged to use a green energy supplier, think about insulating our buildings and reducing our energy use, to think carefully about travel and also about how much we buy. These are things we can continue to think about, pray about and work for together in the coming months and years. They are a key part of living faithfully in God's world and being good neighbours to those in need across the world.

But we cannot make the difference on our own. There have to be changes in policies on a much larger scale. What other ways are there, then, in which we can fight for justice? One of the commitments at COP27, the UN climate change conference last autumn, was to create a Loss and Damage fund. This will help those countries most in need of help as a result of climate change – and help to redress the balance. However, it doesn't

yet have the funds and rich countries are reluctant to pay what has been promised.

Many climate charities, including Christian Aid, have recognised the damage caused by fossil fuels and started a campaign called 'Make Polluters Pay'. Last year four oil companies – BP, Exxon Mobil, Shell and Total Energies – made a combined profit of \$159.5 Billion. So the charities are calling on the Prime Minister to make fossil fuel companies pay into the Loss and Damage Fund. If you would like to get involved in supporting this campaign, you can find more information and a template letter to write to your MP here:

[Make Polluters Pay- MP Letter - Christian Aid](#)

Each small action we take in the face of injustice can feel small and insignificant. Amos called for justice to roll down like rivers but it can feel like we contribute a small drop or two in the face of the injustices of the world. But if you have ever had a dripping tap, you know that one small drip, followed by another, and then another, apart from being VERY annoying, can soon add up to a lot of water. A dripping tap can waste as much as 30 litres of water a day (that's a significant drip!) – this could add up to as much as 2408 gallons over the course of a year. Each small drop contributes to the whole – soon drips become trickles, become rivulets, and before you know it a fast-flowing river has formed.

Amos said that God rejected his people's worship because there was no substance to it. They sang their songs, they gave their tithes, but worship involves the whole of our lives – and flows out in a life of action, loving God as we love our neighbour, living lives of justice and righteousness, as the true way to honour God and bring him glory.

So will we listen for God's voice and add our voices and actions to others, as we pray and work together for climate justice? *'Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.'* Amen.

2023 SEASON OF CREATION PRAYER

Creator of All, from your communion of love life sprung forth like a mighty river and the whole cosmos came into being. On this Earth of overflowing love, the Word was made flesh and went forth with the life-giving waters proclaiming peace and justice for all creation.

You called human beings to till and keep your garden. You placed us into right relationship with each creature, but we failed to listen to the cries of the Earth and the cries of the most vulnerable. We broke with the flowing communion of love and sinned against you by not safeguarding the conditions for life.

We lament the loss of our fellow species and their habitats, we grieve the loss of human cultures, along with the lives and livelihoods that have been displaced or perished, and we ache at the sight of an economy of death, war and violence that we have inflicted on ourselves and on the Earth.

Open our ears to your creative, reconciling and sustaining Word that calls to us through the book of Scripture and the book of creation.

Bless us once again with your life-giving waters so that the Creator Spirit may let justice and peace flow in our hearts and overflow into all creation.

Open our hearts to receive the living waters of God's justice and peace, and to share it with our suffering brothers and sisters, all creatures around us, and all creation.

Bless us to walk together with all people of good will so that the many streams of the living waters of God's justice and peace may become a mighty river all over the Earth.

In the name of the One who came to proclaim good news to all creation, Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer:

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.
And lead us not into temptation;

but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

Offering and Prayer of Dedication

We offer our gifts, asking that they would be spent wisely, invested ethically, and given generously, that we might be a beacon of hope and a voice for justice in this community and in your world. Amen.

Listen, Read, Pray or Sing Along STF 713

[Show me how to stand for justice \(Joy Everingham\)](#)

Show me how to stand for justice

How to work for what is right,

How to challenge false assumptions,

How to walk within the light.

May I learn to share more freely

In a world so full of greed,

Showing your immense compassion

By the life I choose to lead.

Teach my heart to treasure mercy,

Whether given or received

For my need has not diminished

Since the day I first believed.

Let me seek no satisfaction

Boasting of what I have done.

But rejoice that I am pardoned

And accepted in your Son.

Gladly I embrace a lifestyle

Modelled on your living word,

In humility submitting

To the truth that I have heard;

Make me conscious of your presence

Every day in all I do:

By your Spirit's gracious prompting

May I learn to walk with you.

Martin Leckebusch (b. 1962)

Closing Blessing

May we walk simply on this earth, may we be found faithful stewards of God's creation, may we have wisdom and compassion as we act, speak and pray for justice, in the name of God Almighty, Spirit, Son and Father we pray. Amen.

Church Copyright Licence No 30794