

Christian Aid

We believe in life before death

Worship for Sunday 9th May 2021 - Christian Aid week Songs of the Prophets

Welcome

Good morning and welcome to our service today, it is lovely to have you with us as we gather together to worship our loving God. Today marks the start of Christian Aid week 2021 and so will be taking this as the theme for our service today, using materials prepared by Christian Aid on the theme of Climate Justice. Therefore, our worship today gives us the opportunity to look beyond ourselves and to think about how we can work together to make protect the environment and care for the poor.

Introduction

Our service today takes its inspiration from the Songs of the Prophets; that is from global theologians, young people, Christian Aid partners and the prophets of the Bible. Their collective chorus calls for humanity to be in communion with nature, rather than exploitative consumers of it. They call for justice for those who have done the least to cause the climatic crisis but are suffering most. And crucially, they call us to imagine how the world could be, and beckon every one of us to do all we can for the restoration of creation and the flourishing of all, to the glory of God. So let us take a moment to be still in the presence of God so that we are ready for worship this morning.

Call to worship

O sing to the Lord a new song **sing to the Lord, all the Earth.**
Sing to the Lord, **bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day.**
Declare his glory among the nations **his marvellous works among all the peoples.**
For great is the Lord, **and greatly to be praised.**

Hymn: Alleluia sing to Jesus

Prayer of Approach

Come and celebrate our common home, with the mountains, islands and deserts with the lakes, rivers and seas, with the land, its soils, seeds and sustenance, with the forest of great trees, the lungs of the planet. We join with the whole of creation, inspired by those who have gone before and the prophetic voices of today. **Amen**

Prophetic voice of those seeing climate change

The first of the prophetic voices we shall hear today is that of Gloria. These are the words of a young person living at the sharp end of climate change in the Philippines and they remind us that we are not looking after the earth, our home. She calls us both to recognise our poor stewardship and to try to do better, much better.

Gloria says 'I am 19-year-old Glory, from the Philippines. I live on a small island of Tabugon, Carles with my family. It's beautiful and peaceful, with fresh air, coral reefs, and fresh seafood. But it is changing. Living on an island is very challenging. I really feel the impact of climate change. My message for the world is that, we must act on the crisis of climate change. We need to be responsible. We should be concerned on protecting our surroundings because this has been created for us. We have the wisdom to know what is right and what is wrong.'

Hymn: For the beauty of the earth

Prayers of confession

For the beauty of the Earth desecrated by pollution, extinguished by forest fires, choked by plastic waste. Christ, our God, to you we plead forgive us for systemic greed.

For the urgency of this hour ignored by apathy or procrastination, wasted by ineffective decisions, denied by economic interests. Christ, our God and Saviour, forgive us for selfish short-term behaviour.

For the joy of human love fractured by forced migration, crushed by bereavement, lost to typhoons, floods, starvation. Christ, our God, bringer of justice forgive us for this climate crisis.

Absolution

God you know me. You know that I can be loving and kind; and you know that sometimes I get things wrong. I'm sorry for the times I hurt other people, forget to listen to you and don't bother to take care of your world.

God forgive you, Jesus bless you. God's Spirit help you to grow in love. **Amen.**

Silence

Saying yes

Because we are God's people, **we will care for each other.**

Because we are part of God's creation, **we will care for the Earth.**

Because we are loved by God, **we will share God's love with everyone.**

Absolution and Saying Yes (Iona Community Worship Book, 2017).

Prophetic voice of Micah an Old Testament prophet

The second of our prophetic voices is that of Micah. Micah is a biblical prophet who set out to help the people of his time imagine that the earth could be a different and better place and to encourage them to achieve this by living differently. We need our imaginations inspired like this. We will hear an alternative reading of the biblical text from Micah which I hope will inspire your imagination.

Micah 6:1-9 A script for three readers

Reader 1: Listen my people. I need to talk with you. I have questions. I need answers. I have cared for you. I rescued you from slavery. I gave you wise leaders, both women and men. You need to remember the stories of who I am and what I have done. Listen my people. I am talking to those of you who live in the countryside. I am questioning those of you who live in cities and towns.

Reader 2: What have I done to you? How have I wearied you? Speak, the mountains are listening to you. The Earth is waiting to hear your voice. What can I do? What can I bring to God? What does God want of me? What will keep God happy? What will keep God off my back? Would God be impressed with barrels and barrels of olive oil? Would God be satisfied with thousands of animals from my flocks? Perhaps my riches are not enough? Should I offer to God the life of my precious first-born child?

Reader 3: Listen mortal. Listen to what God says. Look carefully at how God acts. Remember the stories of what God has done. God has shown you clearly what is bad and what is good. You are to do justice to act fairly. Do justice in the home and in the street and in the marketplace. Do justice in your community. Work with others to do justice globally. Do justice with strangers and friends and family alike. You are to love kindness. You are to be generous. You are to share your resources and share them with a smile. You are to care for those in need. You are to walk humbly with God. No pretence, no bluster. You are to walk wisely and purposefully. You are to pray and wonder. You are to respect the Earth. You are to experience and learn who God is and what God is about. Listen up mortal. God has told you what is good. So do it. Do justice. Love kindness. Walk humbly with your God.

Reflection taken from sermon notes produced by Rev Dr Craig Gardiner, tutor in Christian Doctrine at South Wales Baptist College.

Micah 6:8: 'what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?'

What do these words mean in the context of climate crisis we are facing.

Do justice

-) God requires us to do justice with those who are the worst affected yet least responsible for the climate crisis. To amplify and join with their voices in the call for climate justice, you can do this by signing the Christian Aid petition which can be found by clicking here <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/get-involved/campaigns/climate-justice-2021>
-) We are encouraged to reflect on the way we live our lives, the impact that it has on the environment and to make a commitment to change so as to walk more lightly on the earth. Take a moment now to think of at least one change you could make to help protect the environment.

Love mercy

-) God requires us to embody loving mercy and kindness. While this, of course, demands that we act with compassion for the wounded creation and for its hurting people, it also begs what may be the more difficult question: how are we to engage the fallen powers in such a way that show redeeming mercy to those who continue to reject the radical changes that are needed for a climate crisis to be averted?
-) Is it to believe with hope that perhaps even the most ardent climate change-denying politician, or the most active carbon-emitting company has the potential to change? It also offers an invitation to show ourselves mercy for any guilt we may feel for our own carbon dependency. Such mercy might save us from silent shame and allow us to loudly call for the system change needed.

Walk humbly

-) Walking humbly means turning to God in prayer, in continuous and collective prayer for the planet. This year, we invite you to join the Christian Aid prayer chain where Christians across Britain, Ireland and the world will bring our prayers of lament, confession, repentance, petition, intercession, praise and thanksgiving. Sign up at <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/pray/prayer-chain>
-) Joining with sisters and brothers across the world in prayer, we remind ourselves that the Earth is the Lord's. In setting our hearts to seek God, we galvanise our courage to do justice and love mercy as we respond to the challenge

The prophetic voice of communities experiencing climate injustice

Our final voice comes from someone who is experiencing the effects of Climate change. We will hear Florence's story which also tells us a little of the work Christian Aid is doing in Kenya where they are supporting the building of earth dams as a way of conserving rain water both for drinking and agriculture. It shows us that that a better stewardship of earth's resources is possible.

Florence's story

Watch Florence's story here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d2g2VYJ2sxc> or read her story below.

Florence is full of life, love and laughter. The women in her farming group look up to her. She's courageous, kind – a survivor. A few years ago, her husband died, leaving her a widow. At that time, she had no water to grow crops. Her children were hungry. She had to walk for hours on dangerous journeys to collect water. 'Life was miserable,' she told us. But things have changed for Florence.

Next to her farm, Florence is proud to show us something remarkable – a dam, full of fresh water. It's thanks to your donations that Florence and her community have built this water dam, with the help of our partner Anglican Development Services – Eastern (ADSE), just a short walk away from her village.

With this dam, Florence can grow tomatoes, onions and chillies on her farm. With this dam, her children can eat healthy, nutritious vegetables. It's her source of life and joy. Florence also uses the water from the dam to keep bees. She sells the rich, golden honey for cash at the market. Now, Florence is reaping a good life for herself and her family. The dam gives Florence strength to withstand even the most unpredictable weather. It's a reliable water source, whether she faces long drought or relentless rainstorms.

Sadly, millions of people in Kenya are desperately struggling to survive climate chaos. You can help another community build a dam. Many more people will have the water they need to sustain their families. By making a donation to the work of Christian Aid you can make a difference to the life of someone struggling with the effects of climate change and help more people like Florence to thrive. If you would like to make a donation to Christian Aid, then please follow the link below.

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/appeals/key-appeals/christian-aid-week>

Hymn: When I needed a neighbour

Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession

God of abundant life, we see your goodness all around us and we thank you for every part of it; from the plants and animals which play their part in complex ecosystems, to the dry deserts and stormy seas which test the limits of life. We pray that in this time of climate crisis and ecological emergency, you may help us to rediscover your love of creation and to reflect that in our own lives. God, in your mercy: **hear our prayer.**

God who speaks through unexpected people, we thank you for contemporary prophets who are challenging us to act on climate change; for indigenous people and their invaluable knowledge of the land and sea where they live, for scientists dedicating their careers to warning us about changes to the planet, and for young people striking for their future. We pray that you will help those in power to hear their prophetic voices. Help them to see beyond short-term political priorities and business plans and give them wisdom and courage when they face difficult decisions. God, in your mercy: **hear our prayer.**

God of second chances, we recognise the damage we have done to the Earth and the injustice we see in society every day, all of it fuelled by worship of profit and possessions. We pray for the coming of a better world with justice, kindness and humility at its heart. We ask that you guide us to be co-creators of this new world. Give us confidence to follow the prophetic voices to stand against injustice to people and to planet. So that together, in your strength, we stop this climate crisis. God, in your mercy: **hear our prayer.**

God of compassion we pray for all those who are suffering whether in body, mind or spirit and in a moment of silence we name any know to us before you. *Silence.* Surround them and those who love and care for them with your healing and peace. We give thanks for the lives of all those who have recently died and for all that they meant to their families and friends. We pray for all those who are grieving at this time, surround them with your comfort and love. God in your mercy: **hear our prayer.**

God of love in a moment of stillness we offer our own prayers for God. *Silence.* We ask all this in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ, who taught us to pray together.

The Lord's prayer

The peace

We are the body of Christ. In the one spirit we were all baptized into one body. Let us then pursue all that makes for peace and builds up our common life. The peace of the Lord be always with you. **And also with you.** Let us offer one another a sign of God's peace.

I know that we are not together physically today and not able to share the peace in our normal way. However, this does not mean that we are not able to share the peace. Bring to mind members of our church family and as you do wish them God's peace. "..... (the name of a member of our church family) God's peace be with you

Hymn: you shall go out with joy

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.**

Go in peace to love and service the Lord. **In the name of Christ. Amen**



The material for our worship today was taken from the Christian Aid website and New Patterns for worship, Church House Publishing 2002