

Local Worship for the environment / Eco-churches



In exploring what it might mean to be Eco-church we have produced and used two services based on the same ideas but presented differently for different congregations and circumstances.

They are provided here so that if you wish to pursue the idea of becoming an Eco church you can root your actions in worship, accessible to your whole congregation.

The materials can be used as a mix and match/ inspiration for producing your own Local Worship

NB there are no prayers of adoration or thanksgiving included as these were hand written by members.

Two service orders have been used from which you can mix and match

Service 1	Service 2
Welcome	Welcome & Call to worship
Hymn: Awake, awake to love and work	Hymn Immortal Invisible
Introduction who's World?	Prayers adoration and thanksgiving
Prayers of thanksgiving Lord's Prayer	Hymn For the beauty of the earth
Hymn For the beauty of the earth	Reading Ezekiel 34:2-4
Drama Planet Doctor	Drama The Rich Fool based on Luke 12:16 - 21
Reading Mark 12:28 - 33 Love thy neighbour	Reading Luke 10: 25 - 29 Who is my neighbour
Hymn Jesu, Jesu, fill us with your love	Talk Selfishness
Reading Luke 12:16 - 21 Bigger barns	Hymn Touch the earth lightly
Talk Our World	Talk Statistics
Prayers confession and forgiveness	Prayers Confession
Hymn Think of a world without any flowers (+spoken verse about science)	Hymn The God who set the stars in space (words below) to tune of I heard the voice of Jesus say
Reading The Starfish thrower	Talk Eco churches
Talk	Prayers Intercession Lord's Prayer
Prayers intercession	Psalm of Stewardship (words below)
Hymn O Lord all the world belongs to you	Hymn God in his love for us lent us this planet
The Grace	Blessing

HYMNS

HYMN

The God Who Set The Stars In Space

The God who set the stars in space and gave the planets birth
created for our dwelling-place
a green and fruitful earth;

a world with wealth and beauty crowned of sky and sea and land,
where life should flourish and abound beneath its Maker's hand.

A world of order and delight God gave for us to tend,
to hold as precious in his sight, to nurture and defend;
but yet on ocean, earth and air the marks of sin are seen, with all that
God created fair polluted and unclean.

O God, by whose redeeming grace the lost may be restored,
who stooped to save our fallen race in Christ, creation's Lord,

through him whose cross is life and peace to cleanse a heart defiled,
may human greed and conflict cease
and all be reconciled.

Renew the wastes of earth again, redeem, restore, repair;
with us, your children, still maintain your covenant of care.

May we, who move from dust to dust and on your grace depend,
no longer, Lord, betray our trust
but prove creation's friend.

Our God, who set the stars in space
and gave the planets birth,
look down from heaven, your dwelling place, and heal the wounds of
earth;
till pain, decay and bondage done,
when death itself has died,
creation's songs shall rise as one
and God be glorified!

Bishop Timothy Dudley-Smith,

Courtesy of A Rocha Eco church resources

HYMN **Think of a World without any flowers**

Additional verse to be spoken between verses 2 and 3.

from Hymns & Psalms

Think of a world without any science,
Think of a journey with nothing to explore,
Think of a quest without any mystery
Nothing to see and nothing left in store;
We thank you Lord for miracles of science
We thank you Lord and praise your holy name

Call to Worship

I'd like to welcome you all to our church today for this Eco service. All are welcome in this place.

This service has been put together by members of all our churches, and is based around the theme of caring for our world.

To all, life thou givest

In all life thou livest

DRAMAS

DRAMA 1 Planet Doctor

Time: 5 – 7 minutes

Cast and setting

PD = Planet Doctor (sits behind a desk, wearing white coat)

Nurse (non-speaking) = appears with Earth's medical records, then shows Earth into the Doctor's surgery

E = Earth (padded out to be as rotund as possible!)

PD: The earth. Give me her file nurse.

Thank you. Yes, right. (looking at a file)

Four thousand six hundred million years old. Quite young for a planet.

Ah! What's this?

A hundred thousand years ago. Signs of human life.

That's worrying.

Air, water. Yes, good. Plants. Yes good.

Extinction of dinosaurs. Mmmm.
Oh! Flu like symptoms:
Warm and sweaty for long periods, then freezing cold.
Show the patient in, nurse. *(nurse ushers Earth in)*

PD: Good morning. Take a seat.

E: Oh! I can't sit down doctor, far too painful.

PD: We'd better stand up then.
You've been losing weight, I gather.

E: Oh, Yes doctor, it's awful.
Me coal and gas and oil are getting really low.

PD: That's obviously due to too much liposuction.
Too much being drawn out,
You can't take millions of years to build these things up
And then remove them all in a couple of centuries.
We'll have to do something to slow that down.
But then you've had all this radical surgery!

E: Oh yes doctor. It's been so painful,
That's why I can't sit down. All these painful scars.
It's been 250 years, and they've only just got round to sending me to you.
And I'm feeling so hot all the time.

PD: Yes, you will be.
That's because of all the extra carbon dioxide you're breathing, from the burning of all
that coal, oil and gas.

E: Ooh! And I get these storms doctor, raging storms and floods,
And then these terrible droughts,
And me sea levels rising something shocking!

PD: Yes, the prognosis is pretty grim actually,
And you're seriously addicted to oil burning aren't you? If we don't wean you off that
the fever could be fatal.

E: Ooh! I hope you can doctor I already have such terrible trouble breathing.

PD: Trouble breathing you said?

E: Ooh, yes doctor. I wheeze like a black hole at times.

PD: That's because you're losing your forests.
I'll have to prescribe trees. High doses of tree planting.
I mean, looking at these notes, this problem's been increasing for 5000 years,
But in this last six hundred or so, it's got rapidly worse.
You'll soon have no fresh air at all.

E: I get this terrible itching too, doctor.

PD: Humans. That's humans, swarming all over you.
Most of your problems start with humans.

E: You mean like all these wars I've got? Ooh! They're really painful!
And then there's me water retention, and me circulation problems.

PD: Yes, I can see your seas rising,
And your dry areas getting more and more arid,
But then there's your temperate zones.

E: Me temperate zones, doctor? What's wrong with me temperate zones?

PD: More and more rain, increasing vulnerability to flooding.
Things are not good, Mrs. Earth, not good at all.

E: And just recently, doctor, I've noticed all this plastic accumulating in me oceans,
killing me lovely sea birds and fish – makes me feel sick and depressed.

PD: I'm afraid that's down to your humans, too,
making stuff you can't process and overloading your digestive system.

PD: You've got an acute halitosis problem as well.

E: I've been worried about that for two hundred years doctor.

PD: It's your air pollution.
Humans again. Oh! Yes.
Industrial revolution
Damaged living organisms,
Including your humans,
With asthma and lung disease,
Not to mention damage to buildings.

E: Oh! Dear. It sounds awful.
And Ooh doctor just look at me ozone layer!

PD: Yes, it's very thin. It could possibly right itself.
But we can't make that assumption.
And your humans are going to get more fatal skin cancers
And problems with cataracts.

E: What's your verdict Doctor?
Is there any hope for me at all?

PD: Well, Mrs. Earth I don't want to give you any false hopes.
I have to say that you are suffering
From an unsustainable growth in your human species.
If your current human activity doesn't
change, I'm afraid your ailments could prove
terminal For the balance of planetary life.

E: Ooh! Doctor! What are we going to do?

Alan Gaunt, hymn writer and member of Parkgate and Neston United Reformed Church, adapted material from Eco-congregation Module 2 into a sketch which was used as part of their Harvest Festival. With a 2018 addition (on plastic) from OWW.

DRAMA 2 A couple plan their latest dinner-party guest list

A couple sit at a table. The woman has a notepad and pen.

Woman: *(writing on her pad)* I was thinking of inviting Jill and Tony.

Man: Do we have to? You know I can't stand the man. Always going on about how well his business is doing and how he's going to change his car - again! He's the biggest bore since the Channel Tunnel!

Woman: But they had us to their last bash, so we owe them one. That's how it works round here, if you hadn't noticed. That's how we keep the wheels of our social circle well oiled.

Man: 'Well oiled' is half the problem, if you ask me! Once some of our little circle have had a few drinks they get pretty nasty. Look at the other night at Bill and Brenda's. That was a nightmare.

Woman: Oh, thanks for reminding me... Bill and Brenda! We've got to invite them too. *(She writes again.)*

Man: If we're having Bill and Brenda then we'll have to have Gary and Sue as well. You know what they're like. They practically live in each other's pockets these days.

Woman: OK. Bill and Brenda; *(writing)* Gary and Sue. What about our new next-door neighbours? It would be a good way of helping them get to know a few folk.

Man: Do you think we should? They're not really our sort of people if you ask me. As far as I can gather he's only a primary-school teacher, and she works part-time as the vicar's secretary. You only have to look at their car. It's ten years old for heaven's sake!

Woman: I hear she's joined the Mothers' Union, and somebody told me that he's started helping with the church youth group.

Man: Exactly! Not our sort of people. The last thing we want at a party is somebody spouting religion.

Woman: Talking about new folk, though - how about that Spanish chap who's moved into the flat at the end. He's ever so good-looking. All the women fancy him.

Man: Has he got a partner? We can't have a single person just floating around spare, can we?

Woman: Maggie told me she's seen quite a few comings and goings. Women and men. So he must have a friend he could bring.

Man: But you don't know anything about him. I bet you don't even know his name!

Woman: Yes I do. He's called 'Heyzoose'. That's what Maggie said. I don't know how you spell it though.

Man: Oh, I do. You spell it 'J... E... S... U... S'.

Woman: *(Slowly - writing it down on her notepad:)* J... E... S... U... S...? That spells 'Jesus'. You're kidding me. He can't be called 'Jesus'.

Man: I think you'll find I'm right. J... E... S... U... S... pronounced the Spanish way: 'Heyzoose'.

Woman: *(Putting down her pen with a bang:)* Well, that settles it then! If we're not having those two Bible-bashers from next door, we're certainly not inviting Jesus!

Psalm of Stewardship

from 'Psalms of Life' a collection of modern psalms written by John Hammersley

1. Father in heaven we come to meet you:
again as Jesus taught us we use your name and address!
2. Yet it's not in heaven but in this world where we meet you:
our daily life and humanity are the world of your creation.
3. You've made us responsible for our world:
you gave us what we have and what we are,
4. we are but stewards of your bounty:
all good things are ours, held in trust from you.
5. Our money and our possessions are not ours by right:
our time and our talents have been given us of your goodness,
6. we have to learn to be responsible stewards:
to hold this earth in trust for our descendants,
7. to sit loose to what we say we own:
throughout our earthly pilgrimage to travel light;
8. you've taught us what you require of your stewards:
it's not what we do or fail to do, but our obedience you will judge.
9. Help us to value not success but faithfulness:
grant us to see the real value of the money we use;
10. we can use worldly wealth to win ourselves some friends:
not money, but the love of money, is the root of all evil.
11. It's not great wealth that we worship:
we honour your faith in us that never wavers.



"The Starfish Thrower"
by Loren Eisely

Once upon a time, there was a wise man who used to go to the ocean to do his writing.

He had a habit of walking on the beach before he began his work.

One day, as he was walking along the shore, he looked down the beach and saw a human figure moving like a dancer. He smiled to himself at the thought of someone who would dance to the day, and so, he walked faster to catch up.

As he got closer, he noticed that the figure was that of a young man, and that what he was doing was not dancing at all. The young man was reaching down to the shore, picking up small objects, and throwing them into the ocean.

He came closer still and called out "Good morning! May I ask what it is that you are doing?"

The young man paused, looked up, and replied "Throwing starfish into the ocean."

"I must ask, then, why are you throwing starfish into the ocean?" asked the somewhat startled wise man.

To this, the young man replied, "The sun is up and the tide is going out. If I don't throw them in, they'll die."

Upon hearing this, the wise man commented, "But, young man, do you not realize that there are miles and miles of beach and there are starfish all along every mile? You can't possibly make a difference!"

At this, the young man bent down, picked up yet another starfish, and

*threw it into the ocean. As it met the water, he said,
"It made a difference for that one."*

PRAYERS

Prayers of confession and forgiveness

God of all Creation.
You have filled the earth with good things.
Food, fuel, seed time and harvest.
Land, property and prosperity.
Placed for our use, through your goodness.
We confess our capacity to make good things, bad.

Through taking and using more than we need.
Through placing profit and gain above the principles of care and sustainability.
Many are left without.

And, in its midst, your world is speaking
Ravaged by storm and flood, melting ice and rising seas.
Declare afresh the message of their Creator.
The earth is not ours to exploit.
But yours, entrusted to our care.

Forgive us when we fail to listen.
Forgive us when we hear
But find the challenge too much for us.

Give us the resolve to act differently.
The wisdom to be faithful stewards of your creation
The courage to work for change.
And the contentment to be satisfied with what this earth can afford to give.

So may we part of your new Creation.
In every aspect of our living and being.
Through Christ our Lord
Amen

Let us pray

Unclutter our lives Lord
We have too much
Consume too much
Expect too much.

Grant us perspective
To see this world
Through others' eyes
Than just our own.

Grant us compassion
Where there is need
To play our part
Not turn aside.

Grant us gratitude
For what we have
Our daily bread
The gift of life.

Unclutter our lives Lord
Give us space
Simplicity
Thankful hearts.

Amen

Prayers of Intercession

Most gracious God, we come before you, to pray for the well being of the planet. You alone know the full extent of the destruction we have wrought to your beautiful handiwork. And, what needs to be done to remedy it.

We pray for people around the globe who suffer because of environmental damage.
We pray for the defenceless creatures, harmed or made extinct, by our selfishness or ignorance.

We pray for the oceans, air, mountains, plants and soil that life may again pulse in them.

We pray that we humans have a change of heart and stop harming the planet.

Pour out you Holy Spirit on us that we may have the passion, and wisdom, to work effectively to restore your creation. Guide us in our personal, Church and Community efforts.

Give us strength to continue on with this work when it is difficult and requires sacrifice.
Bless the Earth and its life in every way.

We ask this in the name of Christ our Lord. Amen

Almighty God
As ages ago you spoke
And brought order out of chaos
Speak again in our troubled times
And "let our ordered lives confess
The beauty of your peace"
As you brought light into darkness
Shed your light upon our lives
So that we see more clearly

To follow Christ
Who is the light of the world.

Amen

OFFERING PRAYER

A house, a home, a world where love can and does dwell. You O lord have made us welcome affirmed us and called us to share your gifts of peace and justice. And so in thanksgiving and commitment, as you have offered to us of yourself, God of grace, living Christ, transforming Spirit so we offer of ourselves to you - in time, material gifts and action. Take our gifts, bless them for the good of your World. Amen.

CLOSING RESPONSES

from Iona Abbey Worship p133 Creation Liturgy

Leader: This we know, the earth does not belong to us,
ALL: We belong to the earth.

Leader: This we know, all things are connected,
ALL: Like the blood that unites one family.

Leader: This we know, we did not weave the web of life,
ALL: We are merely a strand in it.

Leader: This we know, whatever we do to the web,
ALL: we do to ourselves.

Leader: Let us give thanks for the gift of creation,
ALL: Let us give thanks that all things hold together in Christ.

Blessing

Leader:

Bless to us, O God, the moon that is above us, the earth that is beneath us,
The friends who are around us, Your image deep within us,

ALL: AMEN

TALKS

Talk Introduction Whose world is it Anyway?

God created a world which was good. In the hymns this morning we acknowledge the beauty of the earth, with the many things around us that we take for granted every day. The People, Animals, Birds, Flowers, and Trees all which need to be treated with respect.

Last week we sang hymn 481. Some of the words we sang are very appropriate for our service today...

Lord of the fertile earth

Who caused the world to be whose life alone can bring to birth

The fruits of land and sea

Teach us to use aright

And share the gifts you give

To tend the earth as in your sight

That all the world may live

Rather than manage creation on God's behalf have we managed it for our own benefit?

The focus in the service recently was on making decisions and surely this is one of the most important decisions we must take both personally and as a church family

Do we believe that we are called to be custodians of our planet, preserving life and protecting the environment? What do we need to do now, sooner rather than later?

Talk - Our World

Introduction: we are using this service of worship to which we come to on a Sunday morning to think about our environment and our responsibility for it. This will in turn link with the church meeting that follows this service.

We seldom actually think about our environment - or when we have had so little rain that we have to go out and water our gardens to help the plants survive.

We are often thankful that we are lucky enough to live where we do in a temperate climate and surrounded by pleasant countryside.

But we don't very often think about the global situation and our responsibility for it. Occasionally our hearts are troubled if we see programmes like the Blue

Planet or hear of extreme weather conditions or are reminded of changes to places with which we are familiar

So what? It hardly affects my daily life so why should I care.

As Christians we are taught to love our neighbour and Jesus told the parable of the Good Samaritan to explain the breadth of neighbours that he expected us to take responsibility for. Often we use this story to prompt us into generous giving to charities that support our neighbours in need around the world.

But today as we look at the ravages that humanity has made and is continuing to make on the environment we need not just to give money to a third party but to do something practical.

Environments change as the climate changes, as our rubbish collects in the oceans, as our greed creates waste of all sorts that we don't really know how to dispose of. This in turn affects people's lives and livelihoods, causing them misery and suffering. We should surely do something.

There is a saying that there are only two certainties in life, change and death. We understand that we all have to live with and through changes. But at the moment the environmental changes that are happening are accelerating and although humanity can adapt it cannot adapt fast enough to cope with the rising sea levels, dramatic weather systems and rising temperatures that we are seeing at the moment. Our neighbours need time to change their systems, infrastructure and lifestyles to enable them to stabilise their lives and secure their livelihoods. We live our lives selfishly without much consideration for the harm we do but as we see and hear the effects of our selfishness and are presented with solutions to minimise the impact of the way we live on our climate we also must change our lifestyles.

We need to be good neighbours and change **our** lives to enable our neighbours to secure theirs

Talk - Does it make a difference?

Does any act of ours make a difference?

There are so many people in the world, but we have to believe that any individual or group effort to reduce the negative impact our lifestyle is having, will make a difference - if we make no effort then surely we become part of the problem rather than part of the solution.

We can't control what others do but we can lead by example. We can play our part knowing that Yes it will make a difference and as the hymn says we need to live in the right way "That all the world may live"

Talk Selfishness

The story of the man building bigger barns for his bumper grain harvest is a familiar one and we generally interpret it as the futility of saving up treasure on earth when we should be concentrating on heavenly treasures. But today we want to think of it as a story of self-interest. The man knows that if he keeps his grain harvest safe and dry in the security of a barn then he will not have to worry for a number of years in the future. Farming is always a precarious occupation dependent on weather, pests and other vagaries. My grandfather who farmed in South Wales always relied more on the visibility of the island of Lundy as a rain predictor than the BBC weather forecast. The man in the story would probably have described his actions as prudent rather than selfish, and surely we can relate well to that.

The hymn that we sang talked of the beauty of the earth and is an encouragement to recognise it's beauty in all it's forms - earth and sky, day and night and to utilise the joys of sight and hearing to appreciate it.

So do we really appreciate the beauty of the earth? do we appreciate it enough to take time and energy to care for it? or do we just accept it as it is and take from it what we want. How much are we prepared to give up to protect the earth the seas and the skies from damage caused by the way in which we live our lives?

The bible reading from Luke goes on to tell the familiar story of the Good Samaritan. It talks of two men who were self-interested (which could often be interpreted as quite sensible) and opted to reduce the risk of being themselves attacked by the robbers and to pass by on the other side. They preferred to ignore the scene of unpleasantness and not get involved. They preferred to spend their time getting safely to the end of their journey and getting on with the business that was taking them along the road.

And so it is often with us. It is sometimes easier to at least pretend ignorance rather than to bother to take any action with its unknown consequences, difficulties and discomforts; and so we pass by on the other side. One of the big world topics at the moment is the eco system of our world, climate change and global warming, plastics disposal, degradation and pollution.

Do we care?

Do we care at all?

do we care enough?

Do we care enough to learn more about it - accepting that some of that information will be upsetting and difficult to accept?

Do we care enough to feel the burden of shame that we have ignored for too long the situation that is now obvious?

Do we care enough to do something about it and encourage others to care too?

Do we care enough as the words of our next hymn put it to
Use the earth gently and nourish the life of the world in our care

Talk Statistics

Shocking facts about plastics:

How are we endangering our world, how are we acting as agents of death? One of the major concerns today is about our use of plastics.

- About 8.3 billion tonnes of plastic has been produced since the 1950s – the weight of roughly a billion elephants or 47 blue whales
- Only about 9% of this plastic has been recycled, 12% has been burned, and the remaining 79% has ended up in landfills or the environment.
- The equivalent of a truckload of plastic enters the oceans every minute
- Countries like the UK, Canada and the US export plastic waste to various countries in Asia and Africa, offloading their problem to other communities
- UK makes 1.8m tons plastic per annum
- By 2050 plastics production will be using 15% of world's fossil fuels
- 8 billion bottles of water were sold in the UK last year.
- £60m is spent on bottled water at petrol stations.
- Plastic lasts for centuries - we often use it for a few days or weeks

Are we building a house where all can safely live? Not really

Talk Eco-church

Throughout this service we have been using phrases from the Scallop hymn to remind us of the house that we believe that God is calling us to build.

So how could we 'build a house where prophets speak, where all Gods children dare to seek to dream God's reign anew' within the context of the environment?

How can we, small insignificant individuals make any difference?

One of the strengths that each of our churches recognises within itself is its strength of fellowship - the faith that binds us together, that enables us to love and support one another and to take that love of neighbour out beyond our walls of brick and stone.

So how do we do that for the environment? The idea of Eco churches was

discussed at Conference in June and there will be a proposal put to the autumn circuit meeting that each church considers becoming an Eco church.

The Methodist Church endorses A Rocha Eco Church as a means for churches to consider their response to the effects of people on the environment. It does this by asking a number of questions that challenge our behaviour. These can either be used to provoke discussion or completed with the possibility of achieving an Eco-church award at Bronze, Silver or Gold level. The questions cover five areas of the life of a church, Worship and Teaching, Buildings, Land, Community and Lifestyle. Already the churches property stewards are looking at it as it relates to buildings and land.

There is no doubt that not only the Eco survey but also all the information currently available on plastics waste is a real challenge to each of us individually and to our church communities.

Because I co-ordinate the social action mission stream of the circuit I have used Sharnbrook as a trial church - with considerable trepidation.

Some of the questions we are asked as a church are: do we preach and pray and sing for the caring for God's earth - well we have done that today. Does the church keep the congregation informed about the impact of climate change and environmental issues - now that was a challenge for me as steward and as being responsible for the notice boards. But talking about this and the other eco issues raised we now have a new Eco poster in the church, we have discussed the eco survey at our church meeting, and people are beginning to share their stories, frustrations and good ideas more openly - some are surprising. One lady who uses rubber gloves for washing up extends their life by cutting off the fingers and using them to hold water softener over the tap ends to soak the lime-scale, and uses the body as stretchy ties for all sorts of uses. One man stood up at the end of our service last week and told us that his wife was so incensed with Waitrose for triple plastic packing her pate at the delicatessen counter that she complained first to customer service and then by mail. When both of these produced bland answers she wrote again and Waitrose (presumably in Rushden) will now dispense pate into a container that you bring, and I understand that Sainsbury's will do the same. But it is not just these people who have made change happen, we must then actively use the opportunities with which we are presented so that everyone can benefit. It is possible but it takes active thought and action - take a string bag to the farm shop for your veg., instead of buying pre-packaged from the supermarket, use foil or beeswax wraps instead of cling film, walk to church rather than take the car. We will all have different priorities in our personal and church lives but if we are willing we can surely be better stewards of creation than we are at the moment.

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