

Sept 5, 21 – online worship – Creation Sunday Bonni-Belle Pickard

Sing for God's glory – StF 116

Touch the earth lightly – StF 729

O Lord our Lord throughout the earth how glorious is your name – StF 112

Psalm 104

==ORDER OF SERVICE==

Call to worship

Sing for God's glory – StF 116

Energy prayer -- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LIg1PnDIHnc>

Psalm 104 – Jim Bryant, reader

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Lord's Prayer

O Lord our Lord throughout the earth how glorious is your name – StF 112

Benediction

Call to worship

We gather in the image of the Creator
who is a community of love.

We gather in the name of the Redeemer
who reconciles all of creation.

We gather in the presence of the Life Giver
who inspires new life and renews it.

Sing for God's glory – StF 116

Sing for God's glory that colours the dawn of creation,
racing across the sky, trailing bright clouds of elation;
sun of delight
succeeds the velvet of night,
warming the earth's exultation.

Sing for God's power that shatters the chains that would bind us,
searing the darkness of fear and despair that could blind us,
touching our shame
with love that will not lay blame,
reaching out gently to find us.

Sing for God's justice disturbing each easy illusion,
tearing down tyrants and putting our pride to confusion;
lifeblood of right,
resisting evil and slight,
offering freedom's transfusion.

Kathy Galloway (b. 1952)

Energy prayer -- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LIg1PnDIHnc>

Psalm 104

Bless the Lord, O my Soul!

All creatures look to you to give them their food at the proper time.

When you open your hand, they are satisfied with good things.

You have made the moon to mark the seasons; the sun knows its time for setting.

You make darkness, and it is night, when all the animals of the forest come creeping out.

All creatures look to you to give them their food at the proper time.

When you open your hand, they are satisfied with good things.

The lions roar for their prey and seek their food from God;

The sun rises, and they steal away; they return and lie down in their dens.

Then people go out to their work, to their labor until evening.

All creatures look to you to give them their food at the proper time.

When you open your hand, they are satisfied with good things.

From your lofty abode you water the mountains; You make springs gush forth in the valleys; they flow between the hills, giving drink to every wild animal;

All creatures look to you to give them their food at the proper time.

When you open your hand, they are satisfied with good things.

You cause the grass to grow for the cattle, and plants for people to use,

to bring forth food from the Earth, wine to gladden the human heart,

oil to make the face shine, and bread to strengthen the human heart.

All creatures look to you to give them their food at the proper time.

When you open your hand, they are satisfied with good things.

The Earth is satisfied with the fruit of your work.

All creatures look to you to give them their food at the proper time.

When you open your hand, they are satisfied with good things.

May the glory of the Lord endure forever!

Camas slides

Reflections -- BBP

It's sunrise as I write this from the back porch of my brother's home in Central Florida.
The fat yellow sun is just peeping over the tops of the houses in the east;
Steam rises from the swampy shallow ravine between me and those houses.
I can hear the birds and insects and frogs making their early morning chatter.
But I can also hear the background noise, the constant whirr of the motorway traffic.
The beep-beep-beep sound of a refuse truck on its early morning rounds
Competes with a large water bird of some sort making its morning call.
My daddy would know what bird it was.
I, sadly, do not.

I have been working on this particular service about the environment for a few weeks now,
Over a month that has been nothing like I planned.
My original plans involved going to Camas, the Iona youth camp on the Isle of Mull,
With one of my daughters and grandsons,
Then going to the States for two weeks to visit my parents and siblings
And daughters and granddaughters.
I knew I wanted this service to focus on caring for the precious planet we live on.
It was also about caring for people.
So often we divorce the two – thinking the planet is here for us to use however we can,
Or with a fear that preserving the planet means we humans won't have what we need.
In reality, the two are intricately intertwined: we must find ways to treat the earth gently
So that we can all survive in peace.

As it turned out, I did get to Camas the first week of August – not with a daughter
But with two grandsons and another teenage boy from the church.
We had a fabulous time, living close enough to the earth,
That we began to hear her pulse and her sighing –
The tide coming in and out around the tiny island in the bay before us...
The wind and the rain and the sun making their appearances,
Sometimes in sufficient amounts that we could get a hot shower –
When the wind turbine and solar panels
Heated the rain water collected...
The sheep coming to graze when they were hungry,
Thus keeping the grassy parts short and well-fertilised.
The strength of the silent pink granite of the walls and the cliffs
Sheltering us, standing firm.
And then allowing us to test our own strength and nerve against them
As we hike and climb and abseil down the cliff...
We took our turns doing chores – including 'bracken bashing' –
Scything back the ferns – which the scientists tell us
are one of the most ancient plants on our earth – and still so eager to grow ...
But in their eagerness to grow, they often overcome the indigenous trees
planted a few years ago and now struggling to get their own clear view of the sun.
'Bracken bashing' -- cutting back the ferns -- seems counter-intuitive to preserving the earth,
But it's the trees that should be in that space –
And they were cleared generations ago to make room for sheep farming.
Sometimes we have to work hard to reverse the damage we've done.

I keep going back to Camas and to Iona because it is a 'thin place' –
Close to nature and close to God – as well as a place where I grow closer to people.

I keep trying to take young people – and older people – but especially young people,
Because I want them to experience it as well –
The fact that we – people, nature, God – are at our best when we're all connected.
But keeping those connection intact takes deliberate action,
especially in a world which literally seems 'hell-bent' on destroying the connection.

'Hell-bent' is a word I use deliberately.

It is a hell we create for ourselves when we negate or ignore
The heavenly creation God has presented us with.
Like nearly all sin, it creeps in so casually –
I will just do this and so because I really 'need' it right now –
A quick drive to the shops because I'm short on time
An HD TV that will give me a clearer picture
even though it takes four times as much electricity
Another light on so I can stay up after the sun has gone to bed
We can find so many ways to justify our enormous energy use...

As I'm sitting outside my brother's house, there is a loud commotion
As two sand cranes fly across the swampy division, raucously calling to each other.
I'm glad the small strip of swamp is still there.
It's surrounded by manicured lawns of grass that run up to screened-in swimming pools,
One pool behind each house
Including my brother's.
Yes, there is a swimming pool six feet in front of me,
Between me and the swamp.
It has provided many hours of relaxation and recreation
for me and various family members over the past week.
But the screens around it mean that no bugs or birds or wild critters can come in.
Only humans. For our own purposes.
The others must stay in the swamp – and we've concocted good reasons to keep it so.

Many of you will know that the rest of my plans for August went slightly awry,
Which is why I ended up at my brother's house for a week.
My original flight to the US to visit family was cancelled by the airlines...
The second year in a row that I wasn't able to get to my father's birthday celebrations,
At age 90 and then 91.
Instead, two Sundays ago, I got the news that my mother had taken a sudden bad turn
And she died on Sunday, 22 August.
By the miracle of a video link, all my four siblings and my father
Were able to 'be' with her, either virtually or in person, for her final moments.
That would not have been possible just a few years ago...
Or without electricity or satellites or computers or the internet...
I was blessed to be included – and I was grateful for the technology.

And suddenly, the airlines decided I *could* fly –
So three days later, I was sitting with my father in his room
And holding his hand (though I had to wear gloves and a mask and a gown and a visor!)
And talking and praying and singing with him.
A few days later, all five of us siblings and a dozen or so other family members
Were able to join together for a memorial service for my mother

And to scatter her ashes partly in the lake beside their former home
And in the duck pond beside my father's nursing home window.
It was a time of sadness but also of celebration and remembering and laughter and smiles
Knowing the peace that comes with a good ending.

It was in the midst of this that Martin Smith sent me an email with a powerpoint
For today's service – including the hymns I had chosen.
I realized that the first hymn I had chosen ended with a verse
About remembering those who have gone on before us.
I chose that hymn before I knew my mother's passing was imminent.
It was just part of a hymn whose early verses seemed to fit the theme.
*Sing for God's saints who have travelled faith's journey before us,
who in our weariness give us their hope to restore us;
in them we see the new creation to be,
spirit of love made flesh for us.*

That last verse set me thinking:
my mother's legacy as another *spirit of love made flesh* for me.
My mother's legacy was one of overcoming deep difficulties –
She was born and raised during the Depression
At a time when her father wasn't able to get work,
So my grandmother often fed her family on whatever she could grow
in the sandy, steamy backyard of their small S Florida house
she planted the seeds of whatever they'd been able to get to eat...
My grandmother knew their survival depended
On respecting and cajoling the earth to produce what they needed
Nothing more, nothing less.
And, through her actions, she taught the same to my mother.

During the eulogy that I gave at my mother's funeral,
I mentioned that her hard times hadn't ended with her childhood --
How she fed her family of seven (which included me!)
on items she could get from the freight train depot
That had been damaged in transit and she could buy at rock-bottom prices.
How we drank powdered milk because that's what she could afford...
How she made all our clothes –
How she insisted we would get proper educations –
and found ways to pay for music lessons –
and even got us all dance lessons
in exchange for costumes she made for the whole dance studio.

My nieces and nephews all commented afterwards that they'd never understood that before –
Why Grandma was the way she was – not stingy or weird --
But using her creativity to 'make do' and persevere in difficult times.

Their reaction made me understand again my personal responsibility
To care for the earth and those who live upon it –
To carefully consider what I use and how I use it – and how I dispose of it.
To use my own creativity to turn the gifts of our generous God
Into abundant blessings.
To explain – by words and deeds – to my children and grandchildren

What survival is all about –

That God's good earth is generous enough to provide for all our needs
But not our greed.

My trip to the States made me aware again of just how easy it is to excuse my actions –

As 'necessary'... yes, even my flights to the States to see my family...

And the importance of stopping frequently to ask forgiveness of the earth

– and seek to make amends

During my time in the States, it was very hard not to get caught up with the disconnect...

Well-intentioned folk were going about their daily lives

With seemingly little concern for their lifestyle choices.

I probably used more disposable plastic in that week than I had in the previous year!

And there was very little options for doing things differently.

On my last full day in Florida, I went with another daughter and granddaughter to SeaWorld.

I last went there nearly 50 years ago, when it had just opened –

And, with the rest of the crowd, I had oohed and ah-ed with dolphins and whales

Leaping and splashing on cue to entertain us...

What would it be like now? I knew there were now rollercoasters and spinning rides...

And high-tech media shows and the requisite air conditioning in the Florida heat...

What legacy would our visit leave with my 6-year-old granddaughter from Atlanta?

At every turn, SeaWorld, too, was proclaiming its environmental concerns –

How they were active in rescuing some 32,000 wild animals in distress,

Protecting sea life environments around the world,

Raising awareness amongst their audiences of tens of thousands each day.

Yes, we were still watching the whales jumping and splashing,

And with noses pressed against the glass,

We were peering at penguins and fish and seals...

Inside the huge theme park of cement and plastic and motors whirling

On acres of central Florida landscape, no longer wild...

But meant for human entertainment...

I was still thinking that through two days later when I arrived back at Heathrow --

there were signs all around about the 'elephant in the room,'

by which they meant how they were trying to reduce the harmful effects of air travel

how the air industry was trying to care for the planet...

I wondered if the eco-friendly slogans of SeaWorld and Heathrow

Were more than just words – perhaps to make me feel better about my own actions.

I was reminded about the words from scripture that tell us words aren't enough.

That it's our lifestyles that reflect our words and our beliefs.

That our lifestyles become the ways we worship God in our daily life...

And the way we can pass on to others an idea of how they, too, might make changes.

The climate scientists are telling us now

that the changes that occurred at the peak of the 2020 lockdowns

were indicative of the magnitude of the changes that need to happen

in order to avert climate catastrophe.

We need a **200% decrease** in our carbon emissions within the next 8 years.

We need to cut back *again* by the same amount we did in the lockdown

Every year.

We as individuals, even with our best intentions, can't fully do that on our own.

It will take government leadership across the world to make the cuts that are required.
Which is why the COP26 conference is so vitally important.

We are all in this together. We can – and must – each do our individual best,
But we must ALL do our collective best as well.

That's why churches and faith groups and community groups and schools and institutions
Around the world
Are looking intently at Glasgow in November –
To ensure that we are all able to do what's needed to preserve the earth
For human habitation.

It will not be easy.

I'm grateful that I have the examples of my mother and grandmother before me.

They, too, were presented with very difficult circumstances.

They persevered. They used their creativity to take what God gave them

And make it into what was needed, and they delighted in the process and the result.

My prayer is that we will do the same.

For ourselves, for our children, for our grandchildren and greatgrandchildren

That they, too, might know the wonder of hearing the cranes call out at sunrise

And they might delight in the rockpools and the mountain cliffs

And breathe clean air and eat blackberries off the bramble...

On the glorious earth that God has entrusted to our care.

Amen.

COP26 video

Touch the earth lightly – StF 729

Touch the earth lightly,
use the earth gently,
nourish the life of the world in our care:
gift of great wonder,
ours to surrender,
trust for the children tomorrow will bear.

We who endanger,
who create hunger,
agents of death for all creatures that live,
we who would foster
clouds of disaster -
God of our planet, forestall and forgive!

Let there be greening,
birth from the burning,
water that blesses and air that is sweet,
health in God's garden,
hope in God's children,
regeneration that peace will complete.

God of all living,
God of all loving,
God of the seedling, the snow and the sun,
teach us, deflect us,
Christ reconnect us,
using us gently and making us one.
Shirley Erena Murray (b. 1931)

Prayers

Confession (based on Leviticus 25:1-25)

We praise you God, for the Earth that sustains life.

Through the planetary cycles of days and seasons, renewal and growth,
you open your hand to give all creatures our food in the proper time.

In your Wisdom you gave a Sabbath for the land to rest.

But these days our living pushes the planet beyond its limits.

Our demand for growth,

and an endless cycle of production and consumption are exhausting our world.

The forests are leached, the topsoil erodes, the fields fail,

the deserts advance, the seas acidify, the storms intensify.

Humans and animals are forced to flee in search of security.

We have not allowed the land to observe a Sabbath, and the Earth is struggling to renew.

And so we confess. God of mercy and justice,

You tell us the land must rest, free from the burden of production.

**We confess our demand that the Earth produce beyond its limits,
and our bondage to desire more.**

You call us to pause from sowing, pruning, and reaping in ways that destroy the soil.

We confess our vicious consumption of food and energy.

You assure us that we can be filled from the yield of the land.

We confess our lack of trust that we can thrive within the Earth's limits.

You affirm that our security is found in enough.

We confess our lack of courage to resist the myth of endless growth.

You tell us that the land must not be sold permanently,

because the land is Yours, and everything in it.

We confess to thinking of creation as given, instead of a gift.

You call us to leave enough fruit on the vine and in the fields

to feed our neighbours, animals, and replenish the Earth.

We confess our failure to share what we receive from the Earth.

You call us to fairness and justice.

We confess our lack of faith,

not loving you with our whole heart and strength and mind,

or our human and non-human neighbours as ourselves.

Turn us from fear and mistrust,

and free us to imagine a life reconciled to the Earth and all creatures,

through the Good News of Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray.

Amen.(adapted from the Lutheran World Federation)

We remember, Lord, that even as the world is changing,
you remain the same.
Fear often grasps us, but your perfect love remains.
Tomorrow is uncertain, but you're there already.
Strengthen us to continue to stand with the poor throughout.
As it is always they who suffer first and most.

So now, Lord, we pray for our world leaders and preparations for COP26.
Give them wisdom as they lead.
Give them courage as they act.
Give them perseverance as they face opposition.

Help each of us also to show leadership
In our homes,
Our workplaces,
Our schools
And churches.

Remind us that we inherit
The earth from our ancestors
AND we borrow it from our children.

Lord, we thank you for your love.
The love that restores.
The love that renews.
The love that builds hope.
Help us each day
To seek practical opportunities
To put that love into action.
Amen.

Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy Name,
your kingdom come, your 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 yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

O Lord our Lord throughout the earth how glorious is your name – StF 112

O Lord, our Lord, throughout the earth
how glorious is your name,
and glorious too where unseen heavens
your majesty proclaim.
On infant lips, in children's song
a strong defence you raise
to counter enemy and threat,
and foil the rebel's ways.

When I look up and see the stars
which your own fingers made,
and wonder at the moon and stars,
each perfectly displayed;
then I must ask, 'Why do you care?
Why love humanity?
And why keep every mortal name
fixed in your memory?'

Yet such as us you made and meant
just less than gods to be;
with honour and with glory, Lord,
you crowned humanity.
And then dominion you bestowed
for all made by your hand,
all sheep and cattle, birds and fish
that move through sea or land.

O Lord, our Lord, throughout the earth
how glorious is your name!
John L. Bell (b. 1949)

Benediction

May God who established the dance of creation,
Who marvelled at the lilies of the field,
Who transforms chaos to order,
Lead us to transform our lives and the Church
To reflect God's glory in creation.
(CTBI Eco-Congregation Programme)