



SUSTAINABLE SEPTEMBER 2021

Earth, Sea & Sky

Humanity and the Earth

A Service for Sustainable September – 26 September 2021

(Before the service, hand out a natural object, such as a shell, flower, leaf, rock, bark etc to each person. This will be used during the early prayers.)

INTRODUCTION

Of all the creatures of the earth we human beings consciously ponder our own existence. We marvel at the diversity of human cultures, languages and peoples. And we look for how we may live in harmony – with each other and with the earth.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF FIRST PEOPLES

We gather in acknowledgement of the (name of local People), the first inhabitants (or traditional owners/custodians) of this place who dwelt here and cared for it of old.

We gather attentive to their wisdom of living in harmony with the land and in commitment to the ongoing journey of reconciliation between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians.

CALL TO WORSHIP

Praise for tree, star, and ocean.

God's creation.

Praise for child, teen, adult, and elder.

God's creation.

Praise for sun, snow, and rain.

God's creation.

Praise for creatures finned, winged, and hoofed.

God's creation.

Praise for cell, molecule, and atom.

Let us praise God for all of creation.

SONG **Together in Song** 135 All things bright and beautiful
Together in Song 149 This is my Father's world

PRAYER

(people are invited to take their piece of nature in their hands as they pray)

Holy God,
you have shaped us in your likeness.
You have formed us as part of creation.
Your love is our ongoing inheritance.

We reflect upon the symbol of nature we hold in our hands.
We feel its texture, see its form, look at its beauty.

You hold us and love us
As much as anything in your creation.
For this we give you thanks and praise.

Amen.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

(Continue holding your piece of creation as we pray together)

We are joined to every grain of sand:

Earth does not belong to us – we belong to Earth.

We are joined to every shining leaf:

Earth does not belong to us – we belong to Earth.

We are joined to every drop of rain:

Earth does not belong to us – we belong to Earth.

We are joined to every creature's breath:

Earth does not belong to us – we belong to Earth.

We are joined to every beam of light:

Earth does not belong to us – we belong to Earth.

We are joined to every particle of creation.

Earth does not belong to us – we belong to Earth.

We may know this, and yet –

***we confess our arrogance, ignorance, and greed
in how we treat Creation.***

(silence for reflection)

*(as an act of repentance people are asked to bring their fragment of nature
and place it on, or in front of the communion table.)*

We are joined forever to God's remarkable love
which brings us to a place of healing and action.

Through this love, we can live out these words:

Earth does not belong to us – we belong to Earth.

SONG **Together in Song 651 'Take, take off your shoes'**

READINGS James 5: 13-20
Mark 9: 38-50

REFLECTION

SONG **Together in Song 686 'Lord Jesus, we belong to you'**

OFFERING

Merciful God,
your love and grace sustain us day by day.
May we offer these gifts with gratitude,
and offer our own gifts with the generosity
you have shown to us. Amen





PRAYERS FOR OTHERS

For the gift of air, home to dragonfly and magpie;
made oxygen-rich by tall standing trees;
necessary for breath –

We give thanks, and pray for a clean, whole environment for all.

For the gift of water, home to plankton and pigmy perch;
sculpting valleys and coastlines; necessary for life –

We give thanks, O God, and pray for joy and a home for all.

For the gift of plants,
home to caterpillar and koala;
recycling into rich soil; necessary for food –

We give thanks, O God and pray for food and a livelihood for all.

Where these gifts are harmed
by debris and pollution, by climate change,
by destruction of habitat, by corruption and greed –

We pray for justice, healing and renewal, O God.

Where these gifts are harmed
and decisions are needed from all with power
to make new choices –

We pray for the will to choose wisely and un-selfishly, O God.

This gift of interdependence,
woven into every part of creation,
tells us we cannot stand apart from all we share with Earth.

***Holy God, guide us
as we seek to tread gently on Earth,
and live in harmony with all. Amen.***

SONG **Together in Song 687** 'God gives us a future'
 Together in Song 668 Touch the earth lightly

BLESSING

May the God who formed the singing cricket bring us peace.
May the God who formed the rushing wave grant us strength.
May the God who formed the graceful eagle grant us wisdom.
May the God whose image we reflect bless and guide us.

Amen

And now, we go in peace to love and serve the Lord

In the name of Christ.

Amen.

BLESSING SONG

Together in Song 779 'May the feet of God walk with you'

Prayers have been adapted from the Fusion Resources 'Seasons of Creation, Pentecost 2, 2021' – Humanity Sunday.

Whoever is not against us is for us

Mark 9: 38-50

Sustainable September Reflection Week 4 - 26 September 2021

Rev Gordon Scantlebury

Nearly 50 of us from a variety of local social action and environmental groups jammed into the local café. There were people from forest conservation (including 'Nanas for Forests'), people addressing particular planning issues, others campaigning against the destruction from certain industries, people supporting animal conservation, students for climate action, and more. I was asked to speak from a faith perspective. I spoke of how love for our environment was an integral part of my Christian spirituality. I told of work with multi-faith bodies such as the Australian Religious Response to Climate Change (ARRCC) and of Christian groups such as *Common Grace*, and of how we sought to raise awareness, lobby governments and work for positive change.

It was a good, productive time together with so many passionate people working towards the life and sustainability of our planet and its peoples. And it was the very words of Jesus that we hear today that resonated strongly with me; "Whoever is not against me is for me."

Today we are reminded that in seeking to bring in the Kingdom of God for our world we are not alone, and we do not need to be in competition with others in some bizarre race to gain 'brand recognition' with a JESUS stamp on every action. God works towards the good that can happen through a variety of agents, and we, the disciples of Jesus Christ are called to be a part of that work.

I am reminded of instances in scripture where people outside of the body of faith were nevertheless highlighted because of the work they were doing towards God's purpose. In the time of Joshua Rahab the Canaanite prostitute is embraced as one who supported the people of God. Later, the Persian king Cyrus is applauded as a servant of God. Jesus points to the faith of the Roman centurion and that of a Syro-Phoenician woman among others. And in the parable of the Good Shepherd, he speaks enigmatically of having "other sheep that do not belong to this fold." (John 10: 16). There are many good people tirelessly seeking to "cast out the demons from this world" even though they may not be doing so in Jesus' name.

Jesus' disciples were a bit antsy about outsiders doing God's work, but this was no problem for Christ. He could see that good could be done by a variety of people. Are you able to see the Spirit of God at work in our world also, and regardless of the labels we pin on one another? Can you get involved with this work and encourage it, applaud it? And are you willing to give space for others and not cause others to stumble simply because they are not doing this work under the umbrella of the Church or in Christ's





name? We are all called to be salt that makes a positive difference and to be at peace with all.

It warmed my heart at that meeting in the café to recognise members of my own and other Christian churches among those gathered. They were not there to represent their churches. But like me, they were involved in a variety of areas of activism where they too were motivated by their faith in the way of Christ and their spirituality of loving God's creation.

The other thing that struck me was that regardless of the variety of backgrounds among the assembled group, people wanted me to take a stand because of my faith. They didn't want me to be timid or silent about my beliefs, but it encouraged them that people from the Christian Churches also cared about the environment. And maybe my stance of faith also raised questions for them about what their values and motivations and spiritualities were, and where indeed their own faith lay.

We live in a diverse and multi-faceted world. I believe that the spirit of god blows where it will through that world. I believe also that the way of Christ is the path forward for the salvation of our earth. And while some of us follow that path consciously and deliberately, others may be heading in the same direction, but in different ways.

Whoever is not against us may in truth be for us and for god, in Jesus' name. Amen.