

Time to Turn Around

Sustainable September 2022



Week 1 - The Challenge and the Cost

Worship Resources for 4 September 2022.

READINGS

Jeremiah 18: 1-11
Psalm 139
Philemon
Luke 14: 25-33

SONG SUGGESTIONS FROM *TOGETHER IN SONG*

416 Great God, Your Spirit, Like the Wind
422 Come, Holy Spirit, Come
100 All Creatures of Our God and King
547 Be Thou My Vision
572 O Thou Who Camest from Above
610 God, you touch the earth with beauty

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF FIRST PEOPLES

We gather in acknowledgement of the (name of local First Nations People), the traditional custodians of this land. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present and to all of their ancestors who have cared for this place since creation.

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

CALL TO WORSHIP

How precious to us are your thoughts, loving God.

How immense is the number of them!

If we could count them, they would outnumber all the sand.

When we wake up each morning, you are with each one of us.

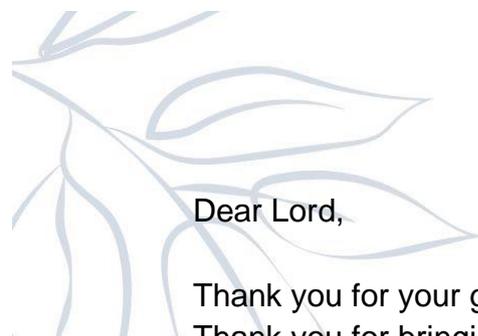
We praise you, for you are awesome!

Wonderful, wonderful, wonderful, are all your works!

Let us together worship God.

PRAYER OF PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING





Dear Lord,

Thank you for your goodness and your blessings over us.

Thank you for bringing hope when all we feel is hopelessness.

Thank you for providing strength when we are weak.

Thank you for showing us love when we are feeling unlovable.

Thank you for a sense of peace when we find ourselves in a state of frantic agitation.

Thank you for showing us your constant, patient love, every day, through the beauty of creation.

For the joyous hope we see in the bright Kimberley Rose blooming effortlessly from a barren branch.

For the towering strength resplendent in the majestic peaks of the Hamersley Ranges.

For the tender love demonstrated by an emu standing protectively over a young chick.

For the moment of peace found in the soft glide of a pelican landing smoothly on the river.

Teach us that, by caring more deeply for our natural world and by stopping more frequently to appreciate and praise your magnificent presence in our environment, we can be in closer communion with you.

Our appreciation for the hope, strength, love and peace you give us can be reflected every day in the care and protection of our own environment, wherever that may be in our vast and awesome country.

Amen

(Libby Williams, Social Justice Commission)

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Creator God,

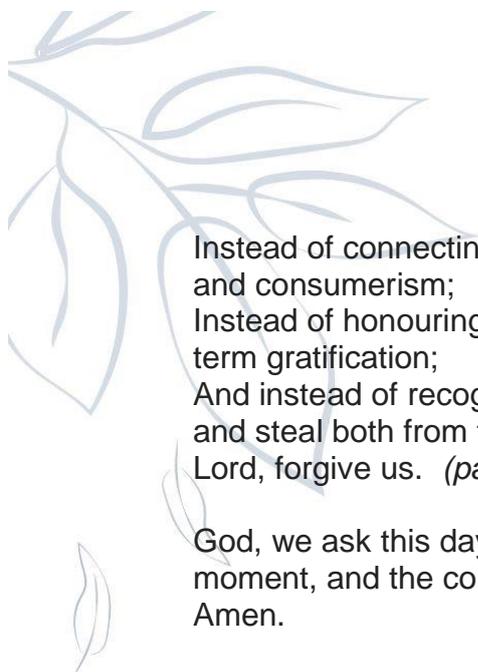
We can never fully know You. Instead, the wisdom of our forebears teaches us to see glimpses of You in the beauty and majesty of our natural world.

Our First Nations people have always known that the earth *is* sacred because the sacred is *in* the earth.

Continents away and centuries later, our Jewish sisters and brothers also found You in nature. In the Old Testament, You appear as cloud and wind and breath and rock.

Later still, John the Baptist used water to bring people into a closer relationship with You, and Jesus knelt in the garden to be near You.

Yet today we seem to have lost this understanding of You.



Instead of connecting with You through nature, we worship the false gods of profit and consumerism;
Instead of honouring You through preservation, we spoil what is precious for short-term gratification;
And instead of recognising that You exist *in* and *for* all things, we take for ourselves and steal both from those who live near us now and those who are not yet living.
Lord, forgive us. *(pause)*

God, we ask this day for the wisdom to help us recognise the urgency of this moment, and the courage to take action before it is too late.
Amen.

(Daniel Vujcich, Social Justice Commission)

REFLECTION



It was around 45 years ago that the spacecraft Voyager 1 took the first picture of the planet Earth and its Moon in a single frame.

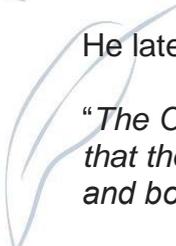
Astronauts have said a lot about the mental effect of seeing Earth from space. It's actually so common it's been given a name – it's called the Overview Effect.

Edgar Mitchell, the sixth person to walk on the moon, said that:



“Something happens to you out there. You develop an instant global consciousness, a people orientation, an intense dissatisfaction with the state of the world, and a compulsion to do something about it.”

He later wrote a book about the subject in which he said:



“The Overview Effect is a message from the universe to humanity. The message is that the Earth, when seen from orbit or the moon, is a whole system where borders and boundaries disappear, and everything is interconnected.”

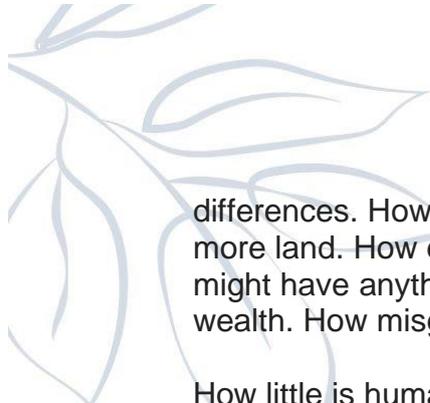


Of course, people of faith already knew this. A Church of Scotland minister by the name of William Leitch predicted the Overview Effect when he wrote *A Journey Through Space* back in 1861. At the time that he wrote, there were not even cars on the street. But Leitch believed that something transformative would happen if we went into space and saw ourselves from the perspective which we have traditionally imagined that God sees us. He wrote:



“It is the immensity of the universe, contrasted with the humble abode of man, that brings out most strikingly the value of the human soul, as redeemed by the death of the Cross. When you attempt to plumb the depths of space, or number the orbs of heaven, your feeling is, How little is man! And, yet, how great, when measured by the price of his redemption!”

In other words, when we get a sense of the sheer vastness of the Universe in which our tiny planet is suspended, we also get a sense of how small we are. How petty are our



differences. How foolish are our desires to fight over the right to possess just a patch more land. How deluded we have become to believe that strength and power and might have anything to do with any number of weapons or any amount of material wealth. How misguided are our attempts to resist collective action.

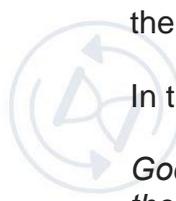
How little is humankind.

But how precious is this world we share.



Astronauts speak about how striking it is to see our little planet of blues and greens and whites against a backdrop of vast blackness. James Lovel, who was part of the Apollo 8 crew, described the vision of our planet as *“the most beautiful thing there was to see in all the heavens”*.

It is no surprise then Lovel and his crewmates felt compelled to read out loud from the Book of Genesis as they looked out the windows of their spacecraft.



In the first chapter of Genesis:

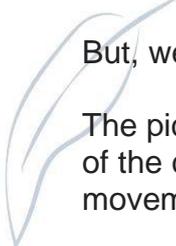
God said, “Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.” And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good.”

And on it goes according to this pattern.



God creates seasons with clear signs. God creates order and beauty out of chaos, and the various parts of creation live in harmony with one another. And it is good.

But, we stand here today and things are not good.



The pictures that astronauts took of our planet from space are credited as being one of the catalysts for our global environmental movement. But the voices of that movement have largely been ignored and we stand at a crossroads.

The order that God created out of chaos is being dragged back into a state of chaos.



Our climate is changing. The pattern is deviating from the pattern God intended for us to have – the pattern which is good.

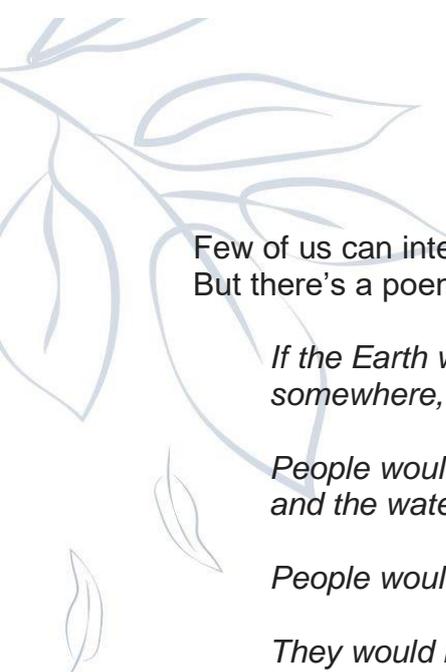


If we are to redress this, we need to see the planet as the astronauts saw our planet. We need to see the planet as God sees our planet. We need to see things from the perspective of a God who knows us deeply and fully, who shapes us as a potter shapes the clay, but who does so with love and intent. We, our whole earth, are this precious creation.

Precious.

Fragile.

One.



Few of us can intellectually imagine what it would be like to see Earth from space. But there's a poem by Joe Miller that helps us come close:

If the Earth were only a few feet in diameter, floating a few feet above a field somewhere, people would come from everywhere to marvel at it.

People would walk around it marvelling at its big pools of water, its little pools and the water flowing between.

People would marvel at the bumps on it and the holes in it.

They would marvel at the very thin layer of gas surrounding it and the water suspended in the gas.

The people would marvel at all the creatures walking around the surface of the ball and at the creatures in the water.

The people would declare it as sacred because it was the only one, and they would protect it so that it would not be hurt.

The ball would be the greatest wonder known, and people would come to pray to it, to be healed, to gain knowledge, to know beauty and to wonder how it could be.

People would love it ... because they would somehow know that their lives could be nothing without it.

If the Earth were only a few feet in diameter.

(Daniel Vujcich, Social Justice Commission)

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Lord God by whose Word the world was called into being—the whole world, and everything in it.

Everything in the world you made was good. All, from the smallest grain of sand to the largest mountain, from the smallest bacterium to the largest whale, and everything in between, was good. And when everything came together it was more than good—it was very good!

Lord of all life,

We have failed to understand how good is your creation;
We have failed to understand how good things working in harmony become very good.

In our ignorance we thought we could make it better,
And instead set it on a path to destruction.

Because of our greed and simplistic thinking much of what was very good has

become less good,
And we are driven to despair.

We ask you to forgive us our lack of understanding, our greed, and our failure to love our neighbours in the knowledge that you have promised to forgive all those who sincerely call upon your name.

Turn us around, and mould us into better people as a potter moulds a lump of clay;
Mould us into people prepared to stand up for all your peoples and all your creation, from least to greatest.

Lord of love and hope,

We pray for the people of our nation and our world, both known and unknown to us, who need to be reacquainted with your love and hope;

People suffering from the ravages of war, hunger, illness, separation from loved ones, natural disasters, and myriad other afflictions.

Turn them around, give them renewed strength and renewed hope and show us how we can love and serve them better.

We pray for those in positions of authority and leadership, who make decisions that affect us all.

May they exercise their leadership wisely, and in accordance with your will.

May the light which is Jesus shine clearly throughout our world, illuminating the path God intends for us, redirecting those who have strayed from his path, and giving hope to those who need it most.

In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

(Bob French, Social Justice Commission)

BLESSING AND DISMISSAL

Go now to live your life and faith with true commitment.
Take up your cross and follow the Way of Christ Jesus.

And as you go,
may God shape you in the ways of love and justice;
May Christ Jesus refresh your heart;
And may the Holy Spirit surround you with grace and peace.

We go in peace to love and serve the Lord,

In the name of Christ. Amen.

(adapted from Nathan Nettleton)