Creationtide Worship Resource

Theme

We are called to be in a positive relationship with the rest of creation, and different models have been suggested for this. It is important to understand how God calls us into relationship with creation to really consider our actions relating to climate and the environment.

How to Use this Resource

This worship resource is designed to offer different options and approaches to engaging with this important topic. It is not expected that everything offered here will work for all groups or congregations; you are encouraged to choose the sections that most resonate with you, and will most resonate with those gathering in worship.

In this resource you will find:

Biblical References and Commentary			Passages of Scripture, with some thoughts and commentary to help us engage with God's love for creation.
Reflection Questions			These can be used as personal reflections in writing a sermon, or used in a discussion with small groups or a whole congregation.
Prayers			A variety of ways to approach God in prayer, focusing on thanksgiving, repentance, lament and hope, and intercession.
Creative Activities			Fun, intergenerational activities to engage as many people as possible.
Music			Suggested songs of different musical styles, with references to *Singing the Faith*, songs for younger audiences, meditative music and secular songs.
Arts and Resources			A selection of videos, images and further reading to inspire and enliven worship.
Sending Out	 	 	Some simple ways for those engaging in worship to respond in their own lives.

Biblical References and Commentary

Models of relationship with creation

In Genesis 1:26, we read that God gave dominion over all things to humans (NRSVue). The New International Version (NIV) uses the phrase "rule over" and The Living Bible (TLB) uses "master of". These understandings have led to much damage being caused by humans, and the deplorable treatment of the rest of creation. This language is still used to support unjust attitudes towards other beings.

For centuries, the Hebrew word "radah" has been translated as 'dominion', but this 'dominion' needs to be viewed in the broader biblical context. Where "radah" is used to denote oppressive, tyrannical or self-centered rule, we see God's displeasure and judgement (eg in Ezekiel 34). Instead, we are called to exercise "radah" as a reflection of God's rule – through love and to the benefit of all creation. For further exploration of this theme, see **Strong's Hebrew: 7287. הָדָר (radah) -- To rule, to have dominion, to subdue**[1]

However, some have become uncomfortable with the concepts of ruling, dominating and mastering, and instead interpret these to mean 'stewardship'. This word does not appear in Genesis in any translation (see **exeter.ac.uk/research/projects/theology/beyondstewardship/topics/origins**).

The Message uses the phrase "be responsible for". Yet, while stewardship and responsibility might better reflect our understanding of the divine model of "radah", it is still suggesting that humans are set above, or superior to, all other living beings. This creates a separation between humans and the rest of creation, leading to the sort of denigration that we see today.

We are offered a biblical view of both the positive and negative interpretations of "radah" in Ezekiel 34:

> The word of the LORD came to me: "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy and say to them: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Woe to you shepherds of Israel who only take care of yourselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock?' (NIV)

The shepherd is called to strengthen the weak, heal the sick and bind the injured, not to simply exploit and plunder those under their care.

In Genesis 2, not only is the story different from Genesis 1, but so is the language and the way it is translated. In the NRSVue the first human is told that their responsibility to the earth is to "till it and keep it". TLB says "tend and care for". The Authorised Version (AV) says to "dress it and keep it", which again suggests a responsibility of care.

All of these translations offer a model that is clearly distinct from an interpretation of dominion (as in Genesis 1) that allows or even encourages exploitation.

In the original Hebrew the words "abad" and "shamar" are used. The first means 'to work for, serve as a slave'; the second 'to care for, preserve, learn from'. These two words give earth primacy, not humans. For more information see **Strong's Hebrew: 5647. דָּבַע (abad)**

1 **biblehub.com/hebrew/7287.htm**

-- serve, served, perform[2] and **Strong's Hebrew: 8104. רַמָּשׁ (shamar) -- To keep, guard, observe, give heed.**[3] As we have seen, however, this is perhaps not that different from what is asked of us through "radah" in Genesis 1. We are asked to be in service to the earth, not the other way round.

2 **biblehub.com/hebrew/5647.htm**

3 **biblehub.com/hebrew/8104.htm**

Reflection Questions

- In the commentary, we have explored models of dominion, stewardship and service. Which of these models did you learn or grow up with?
- What does your church say about these models? Is that reflected in the practices of the church?
- What might it mean to live in service to creation?
- Isaiah 55:12 makes clear that God does not need us to be present in order to be worshipped. The non-human world is perfectly capable of worshipping God without us. So how might we see where the earth is rejoicing? And how might we join in, as equals rather than masters?

Prayers

The prayers in this section have been chosen to help us engage with God through thanksgiving, repentance, lament and hope, and intercession.

Prayer of praise

God of wonder and beauty,
maker of all:
from city parks to country fields,
from roaring rivers to small streams,
from mighty mountains to verdant valleys.
You imagine the lyrics of creation.

God of wonder and beauty,
enfleshed in Jesus:
from birds to beetles,
from cats to centipedes,
from humans to hornets.
All creation has a song to sing.

God of wonder and beauty,
spirit of wisdom:
from pollution to protection,
from ruin to restoration.
Now all may truly join in creation's choir. Amen.

Praise body prayer

Theme: God's abundance in creation

Creator God, we praise you for your wonderful creation, which shapes the rhythm of our lives.

Reach up high – stretch arms to the sky
Thank you, God, for the vast skies and warm sunlight.

Spread arms wide – like welcoming a friend
Thank you for the diversity of creation – every colour, shape and creature.

Hands to heart – gentle press
Thank you for the food we eat, the clean water we drink, the homes where we live.

Hands on stomach – circle hands
Thank you that the earth provides what we need to grow and be strong.

Stamp feet gently – grounding
Thank you for the ground beneath us, full of plants, insects and hidden life.

Open hands forwards – offering
Thank you for your abundance, shared with love and joy.

Prayer of repentance

Creator God,
We know that we have damaged the gifts you have given to us,
the earth no longer groans in labour pains,
but screams with the agony of climate change,
conflict, injustice and environmental destruction.
Help us to see more clearly, to do better and to take more care:
Gracious God, heal your world.

We know that to you the darkness is as light,
yet we cannot see clearly the way you would have us go.
We know that you require us to live lives of justice, and peace,
yet we ignore the needs of our neighbours and cause harm.
Help us to see more clearly, to do better and to take more care:
Gracious God, heal your world.

We know that you are with us, always, in every place,
yet sometimes we feel abandoned and lost.
We feel tiny in a great universe, and overwhelmed by a complex world.
Remind us that you love us and help us to live in that assurance.
Help us to see more clearly, to do better and to take more care:
Gracious God, heal your world.

The Revd Michaela Youngson
Assistant Secretary of the Conference

Repentance body prayer

Theme: Turning hearts and actions back to God

Hands on heart
God, we are sorry for when we waste water, food or resources.

Hands open and low – sign of letting go
We are sorry when we think only of ourselves and forget your wider creation.

Hands turned upwards – sign of change
Help us to make better choices – to produce less waste, recycle and treasure your world.

Stand tall, open arms
Give us courage to live differently, to protect creation and to care for each other.

Prayer of lament and hope

Prophetic weeping

No wonder the prophet weeps yet –
We begin again, but not innocent…
As we begin, the powers of globalisation surge;
there are victims, but we are mostly beneficiaries.
There are wars and rumours of wars,
there are victims, but we are likely perpetrators.
There is violence, towards women and children, towards the poor,
violence which refuses to forgive,
and we are a mix
of victim and perpetrator.
The democratic process continues
but it is mostly devoid of gravitas.
and our alarm is modest.
No wonder there is fear, reams of despair, and acres of weeping!
And we feebly watch for you and wait.
Teach us how to weep while we wait,
and how to hope while we weep,
and how to care while we hope… Amen

Walter Brueggemann, *Awed to Heaven, Rooted in Earth: Prayers of Walter Brueggemann* (Fortress Press, 2003). Used with permission.

Lament body prayer

Theme: When creation is harmed

Hands cupped like binoculars in front of eyes
God, we are sad when we see places where creation is hurting.

Hands cupped around ears – amplifying sound
When we hear about polluted rivers, burning forests or hungry people – we lament.

Hands on heart
We feel sorrow for the creatures losing homes, for damaged ecosystems, for wastefulness.

Kneel, bow heads or lay face-down on the floor (optional)
We lament when our choices forget or overlook your gift of creation.

Prayers of intercession

We pray in thanksgiving for Mother Earth in whom all life is rooted, Brother Sun whose energy radiates life, Sister Water who nurtures and revives us, and co-creatures with whom we live, and for whom we are called to till and keep this garden.

All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe and in the smallest of your creatures. You embrace with your tenderness all that exists. Pour out upon us the power of your love, that we may protect life and beauty. Fill us with peace, that we may live as brothers and sisters, harming no one.

Creative Spirit,
enlighten our hearts and restore your world.

O God of the poor, help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth, so precious in your eyes. Bring healing to our lives, that we may protect the world and not prey on it, that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction. Touch the hearts of those who look only for gain at the expense of the poor and the earth.

Creative Spirit,
enlighten our hearts and restore your world.

Teach us to discover the worth of each thing, to be filled with awe and contemplation, to recognise that we are profoundly united with every creature as we journey towards your infinite light.

Creative Spirit,
enlighten our hearts and restore your world.

We thank you for being with us each day. Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle for justice, love and peace.

Creative Spirit,
enlighten our hearts and restore your world. Amen.

Adapted from *A prayer for our earth*, from Pope Francis' *Laudato Si*,
used in 2019 Creationtide resources.

Intercession body prayer

Theme: Praying for the world, people and ecosystems

Hands in a circle shape
God, please protect Earth's water – rivers, seas, rain – and all who depend on them.

Hands like a bowl
Bless farmers, growers and all who bring food to our tables.

Hands pointing around the room
We pray for all people, all cultures and all creatures – each part of your diverse creation.

Hands making a recycling symbol – make a circular motion with your hands
Help leaders, communities and families to care for creation wisely and to reduce, reuse and recycle.

Hands joined with others
Guide us to make choices that help the planet and help one another.

Intergenerational creation song

(Simple melody – think “Taizé-light”: repetitive, meditative, easy to pick up. Perfect as a sung response between body-prayer sections.)

Refrain

Creator God, we belong to you,
teach our hearts what we should do.
Hands to help and feet to care,
make us your creation-prayer.

Verse 1 – Thanksgiving

For water, food, for earth and sky,
for every creature low and high,
for gifts that grow in every land,
we praise you, God, with heart and hand.

Verse 2 – Lament

When forests fade, when waters cry,
when creatures disappear and die,
we bow our heads, we feel the pain,
and ask your healing earth again.

Verse 3 – Intercession

Bless those who plant, who guard the seas,
who care for land and buzzing bees.
Families, all who stand
to mend and tend your wondrous land.

Verse 4 – Repentance and sending

Forgive us when we fail to see
the world you shaped for harmony.
Send us to act, to love, to share,
for we are your creation-prayer.

Creative Activities

"Tend and keep" hands activity	
Purpose:	To help all ages imagine themselves serving and preserving the earth as Genesis 2 describes.
Time:	5 minutes
Materials:	None

Step-by-step instructions:

- Ask everyone to cup their hands, as though holding something delicate.
- Invite them to imagine a tiny seed, a small creature, a patch of soil or a fragile ecosystem.
- Say: "Genesis 2 uses two words: abad (to serve) and shamar (to preserve, watch over). These hands show we are called to be in service to the earth, not ruling over it."
- Ask: "What would change in your home, in your choices, if this is how we lived?"

Key points:

- Embodies humility.
- Centres earth, not humans.
- Connects compassion with responsibility.

"From exclusion to belonging" – simple symbolic action	
Purpose:	To challenge harmful separation of humans from the rest of creation and celebrate shared belonging.
Time:	5 minutes
Materials:	None

Step-by-step instructions:

- Ask everyone to stand in a circle (or imagine a circle if space is tight).
- Say: "We often stand apart – from nature, from animals and from people who are different. But God calls us into belonging."
- Everyone takes one step inwards, symbolising moving towards compassion and kinship.
- Everyone says: "We choose to walk among creation, not above it."

Key points:

- Counters othering.
- Embodies Jesus' posture.
- Fits both Genesis stories.

"Good, good, good!" – creation sorting game	
Purpose:	To help children recognise the goodness in creation the way God does in Genesis 1.
Time:	10 minutes
Materials:	Pictures of animals, plants, people, landscapes, insects, the sea, the sky etc. (these can be printed from **pixabay.com/images/search/environment**) and labels reading "Good!" and "Needs care".

Step-by-step instructions:

- Lay out the pictures of creation.
- Ask the children sort them into piles labelled "Good!" and "Needs care".
- Reflect together: Everything God made was good. Some things need more care because of how people treat creation.
- Connect to Jesus' compassion: Jesus looked and saw the truth of how things were and felt compassion. We can look at things like that too.

"Among, not above" walking activity (radah)	
Purpose:	To explore radah as "among", like a shepherd among sheep.
Time:	5–7 minutes
Materials:	None

Step-by-step instructions:

- Ask for 6–10 volunteers of mixed ages to stand in a small cluster, representing 'the flock'.
- Choose one volunteer to be the 'shepherd'.
- Round 1 – Shepherd outside/above: The shepherd stands outside the group and gives directions telling them where to go. Ask the group, "How does this feel?"
- Round 2 – Shepherd among: The shepherd walks gently among them, now guiding by presence, not force. Ask the group, "What feels different now?"
- Whole-group reflection: This is the difference between domination and radah – gentle leadership among creation.

Key points:

- Reflects the shepherd image.
- Shows a non-hierarchical, relational model.
- Togetherness mirrors Jesus walking among the crowds.

Music

You can find lots of ideas and inspiration for music about climate and creation at [webpage]. Here are some suggestions focusing on creation and our place within it.

Hymns

- *Singing the Faith (StF)* 99 – All creatures of our God and King
- *StF* 100 – All things bright and beautiful
- *StF* 114 – Oh, the life of the world is a joy and a treasure
- *StF* 536 – He's got the whole world in his hand

Suggested Songs

- Fischy Music (Subscription required) – **fischy.com/fischy-music-online/song-playlists/environment-climate-change-and-sustainability-health-wellbeing/**
  Especially:
  - *Creativity*
  - *Seasons for Growth*
  - *Wonderful World* **Wonderful World by Fischy Music**
  - *What Kind of World Are We Passing On*
  - *Elements*
  - *May You Find Peace*
  - *Build Up – community and stewardship focus*
  - *You Are a Star – identity and wonder (can also link to creation and uniqueness).*
- *God Made Me* (various publishers)
- *If I Were a Butterfly (The Butterfly Song)* – different versions available on YouTube
- *Creation Song (Jesus, You're My Superhero)* – with creation verses **youtube.com/watch?v=vsByZSqSXtA**

Arts and Resources

Here are some suggestions focusing on creation and our place within it:

Spirited Arts – National Association of Teachers of Religious Education **natre.org.uk/about-natre/projects/spirited-arts/spirited-arts-gallery/2024/**

Abbey of the Arts, Self-Study page **abbeyofthearts.com/programs/self-study-online/** There are some lovely self-study resources here, many of which are linked with the creation we are part of. They are not free, however, so make sure you have a look at the Reflections page too, where you can find some great blog posts. **abbeyofthearts.com/abbey-blog**

If you liked the body prayers, you can find more on the Contemplative Fire YouTube channel: **youtube.com/playlist?list=PLLGuDY7ormFg-afS-PFDohcNa-OkNlIXl**

Books you might find useful in aiding your thinking:

Braiding Sweetgrass by Robin Wall Kimmerer

Refugia by Debra Rienstra

Great Tide Rising by Kathleen Dean Moore

Nature's Blessings by Kirsten Riddle (this one has lots of activities to link you more closely with the nature of which we are a part)

Sending Out

Just One Thing – show some love to creation. Invite individuals to make a commitment of how their experiences in worship will impact their next week or month. You might want to find time in the coming weeks to allow people to share their progress.

Some possible commitments to consider:

- Do some more learning.
- Support a local or national environmental organisation.
- Make a lifestyle change to reduce your environmental impact.
- Find out about your carbon footprint: **footprintr.me**

Small Groups. Take the conversation to your small group to help inspire and support each other, as well as providing some positive accountability.

Create an eco-group, or invite others to join an existing group. Think about encouraging a diverse group of people, of all ages and backgrounds. There may be an existing community group that members of the church can join, with opportunities to share the work of the group with the church.

Join Eco Church, or work towards the next award level. Head to **ecochurch.arocha.org.uk** to sign up to be an Eco Church and find lots of brilliant resources. If you have already received an award, have a look at what you need to do to reach the next award.

Thought to action – embodied sending prayer

Theme: Becoming creation-carers in daily life

Touch head
God, fill our minds with wise thoughts.

Touch heart
Fill our hearts with compassion for all creation.

Reach out hands
Fill our actions with kindness – to people, creatures and the earth.

Step forwards with one foot
Help us step into the world ready to care, ready to love, ready to act.

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