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Service for the 13th Sunday after Trinity, 29th August 2021

A warm welcome to all who share in worship with us today.

This service includes Holy Communion

CALL TO WORSHIP

As the ground untilled, uncared-for, neglected, yields neither harvest nor the promise of growth; so the life in which prayer is ignored and worship is abandoned grows barren and unyielding. Come! Let us plough deep furrows of adoration and sow the seeds of praise.

HYMN: Morning has broken

If you would like to sing this hymn, click the icon on the webpage for organ accompaniment.

1 Morning has broken like the first morning,
Blackbird has spoken like the first bird.
Praise for the singing! Praise for the morning!
Praise for them, springing fresh from the Word!

2 Sweet the rain's new fall, sunlit from Heaven,
Like the first dewfall on the first grass.
Praise for the sweetness of the wet garden,
Sprung in completeness where his feet pass.

3 Mine is the sunlight, mine is the morning,
Born of the one light Eden saw play.
Praise with elation, praise every morning,
God's re-creation of the new day!

Eleanor Farjeon

PRAYER

Let us pray

Creator God, how deep are your designs! You made a living earth, cloud, rain and wind, and charged us with their care.

We confess that the way we live today is changing the climate, the seas and the balance of life, dispossessing the poor and future generations.

Build our lives into an ark for all creation, and, as you promised Noah never to repeat the Flood, so make us heralds of a new rainbow covenant: choosing life for all that is at risk - for creation, for neighbours near and far, and for our children and ourselves.

Amen.

(from the Operation Noah launch, Coventry Cathedral, 2004)

INTRODUCTION

The climate news is not good. We keep hearing about record temperatures, wildfires out of control, terrible rain and floods in so many different areas. Now there is the IPCC report on climate change that came out a few weeks ago, painting a picture of utter devastation:

perhaps a situation that is not survivable unless we change our ways and seriously work on getting to zero carbon for the entire world.

Scary news – we hear it all the time now – why bring it into worship?

Well, we believe the God we serve created this world and tasked us to look after it.

As churches are re-opening and finding our feet after the lockdowns, we need to listen to God's Word and discover where He wants us to go now. Specifically, Christian action includes worship and prayer. That is why *Churches Together in Britain and Ireland* are aiming to encourage each local church to have a 'Climate Sunday' before September. Today it is your turn!

SCRIPTURE READING

II Chronicles 7: 11-18

After King Solomon had finished the Temple and the palace, successfully completing all his plans for them, ¹² the LORD appeared to him at night. He said to him, "I have heard your prayer, and I accept this Temple as the place where sacrifices are to be offered to me. ¹³ Whenever I hold back the rain or send locusts to eat up the crops or send an epidemic on my people, ¹⁴ if they pray to me and repent and turn away from the evil they have been doing, then I will hear them in heaven, forgive their sins, and make their land prosperous again. ¹⁵ I will watch over this Temple and be ready to hear all the prayers that are offered here, ¹⁶ because I have chosen it and consecrated it as the place where I will be worshipped forever. I will watch over it and protect it for all time. ¹⁷ If you serve me faithfully as your father David did, obeying my laws and doing everything I have commanded you, ¹⁸ I will keep the promise I made to your father David when I told him that Israel would always be ruled by his descendants.

Thanks be to God.

SERMON: *Revd Franziska Herring*

"If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, pray, seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land."

These words came to King Solomon after he had built a temple for God and had dedicated it. God was pleased and promised to hear the prayers of His people, especially if and when there were environmental disasters. That was in accord with the faith of the people of Israel back in the Bronze Age. Is our faith in the 21st century after the birth of Christ at all relevant to these sentiments?

Well, God called Solomon and his people to turn from their wicked ways, and then he would heal their land. The IPCC Report made it quite clear that we need to turn around from our destructive way of living: we need to turn around fast before it is going to be too late. It also made clear that much of our land needs healing. As Christians, we have the faith that God is the Creator of this earth, that God is in charge of its welfare and ours, and that we have been charged with cooperating in working for the welfare of people and nature. This

gives the Christian church an inbuilt head-start in a task that must now be taken on by EVERYBODY, if our children and grandchildren are to survive this century.

Here at Broadway URC, you have already started to take on the challenge by registering as an Eco-church and actually winning a bronze award. Now there is the need to go further – on three levels: as individuals, as a church community and as a nation.

There are plenty of ideas floating about for individuals on how we can each improve our lifestyles. As you know, I have had an interest in living with a small carbon footprint for many years; but even now, I find new ideas to incorporate into a more responsible way of living. I have recently found out where locally there is a shop that sells cleaning materials and toiletries without plastic containers, and I have started refilling bottles of hand wash, shampoo, surface cleaner and washing detergent. I simply didn't know about this and I also don't know what you have in this area – but it's worth finding out. Another new thing I have started is to garden without peat: a bit of effort, but it does work and yields good results. Oh, and I have dug up a corner of my lawn and planted a wildflower meadow. All these little things add up, and if you're on the look-out, you can always add a little bit more.

As for ideas for churches, being registered as an Eco-church, you should have access to lots of useful ideas about what to do next. In the URC, we now have an Eco-steering Group with lots of ideas to share. Through that group I found that Wylde Green URC have a thriving Eco-group and on 2nd October they are holding an Eco & Arts Festival, which should be brim-full of fun and ideas for action.

Then there is the national and international effort. This is mainly in preparation for the COP 26 conference in Glasgow in November. As part of that, there will be a national ecumenical service next Sunday afternoon, and all Climate Sunday Services registered there will be counted as part of a petition to the government, showing how important this issue is to churches.

There are also many ideas on the [Christian Aid website](#). One is for as many people as possible to write a prayer onto a paper boat and send that in to the organisers of COP 26 as part of a mass petition. The idea of a boat is actually from the actions of the Young Christians' Climate Network, who are walking in a relay from the G7 conference in Cornwall to the COP 26, taking with them a boat as a symbol. Today, they will be in Tamworth.

As Christians, we have the indestructible hope that God is in charge, that the God of Love is planning for us a bright future, and we need to live our faith by doing His work.

HYMN: How firm foundation

*If you would like to **sing** this hymn, click the icon on the webpage for organ accompaniment.*

1 How firm a foundation, you saints of the Lord,
is laid for your faith in his excellent Word!
What more can he say than to you he has said,
to you who for refuge to Jesus have fled?

2 "Fear not, I am with you; O be not dismayed,
for I am your God, and will still give you aid.
I'll strengthen you, help you, and cause you to stand,
upheld by my righteous, omnipotent hand.

3 "When through the deep waters I call you to go,
the rivers of sorrow shall not overflow,
for I will be with you, your troubles to bless,
and sanctify to you the deepest distress.

4 "When through fiery trials your pathway shall lie,
my grace, all sufficient, shall be your supply.
The flames shall not hurt you. I only design
your dross to consume, and your gold to refine.

5 "The soul that on Jesus still leans for repose,
I will not, I will not desert to its foes.
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,
I'll never, no never, no never forsake!"

"K ____"

PRAYERS of intercession

Let us pray

We pray for the people of Afghanistan and for the efforts of so many western nations to evacuate its refugees. We pray that the Taliban may find a way to use their power to govern that country with fairness and wisdom, overcoming their violent ways.

We pray for the people of Haiti, whose country is once again devastated after an earthquake. Dear Lord, please don't let the aid agencies forget those poor people amongst all the other needs pressing in on us.

We praise you – creating, sustaining, forgiving God – who works all things together for good. Through the pain, loss and turmoil of the pandemic, we have learned to cope with more change than we thought possible. Thank you for your solidarity with our humanity as we face up to climate change and biodiversity loss.

Inspire, we pray, people striving everywhere to cut emissions, to protect and restore oceans, forests, wetlands and soil and to adapt to global warming. Comfort and encourage the people who are already counting the cost of climate change in their lives.

We pray for the victims of recent weather disasters: the heat waves and fires, the floods and the hurricanes.

Give this nation a sense of your justice as our society rethinks what is really important. Loving God, we praise you for your faithfulness despite our foolish ways. We thank you for your Holy Spirit inspiring, encouraging, enabling us. We thank you for Jesus, who loves us and weeps over us and who, by coming here, made this wonderful planet sacred.

Almighty God, in November, at great cost and with great urgency, the leaders of the nations and those with concern for our common home will gather in Glasgow. We ask for your welcoming, affirming presence in this event. Give freedom from the burdens of the past to those who make decisions, and those who are planning and negotiating even now. Liberate them to act with urgency, hope and confidence.

Amen.

HOLY COMMUNION

(Please prepare bread and wine/juice)

INVITATION

Hear the gracious words of our Lord Jesus Christ, "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Anyone who comes to me, I will never drive away."

NARRATIVE OF THE INSTITUTION

During supper Jesus poured water into a basin, and began to wash his disciples' feet and to wipe them with a towel. He said "If I do not wash you, you have no part with me".

By that baptism into his death, we were buried with Christ and lay dead, so that as Christ was raised from death we might walk in new life.

Jesus said "How I have longed to eat this Passover meal with you before my death, for I will not eat it again until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God."

Christ our Passover has been sacrificed for us, therefore let us keep the feast.

As they were eating, he said "Truly I say to you, one of you will betray me." And they were very sorrowful and began to ask "Is it I?"

For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Who will deliver me from this body of death?

Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and said "Take, eat; this is my body". And he took a cup and said "Drink of it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for the forgiveness of sins."

Ours is not a high priest unable to sympathize with our weakness, but one who has been tested in every way. Therefore let us boldly approach the throne of God.

He said "You are those who have stood by me in my trials. I now give you the kingship which my Father gave me, and you shall eat and drink at my table in my kingdom."

Blessed be the coming kingdom of our father David. Peace in heaven and glory in the highest.

THANKSGIVING

Lift up your hearts: **we lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God: **it is right to give our thanks and praise.**

With joy we give you thanks and praise. Almighty God, Source of all life and love, that we can live in this your world, that you are always creating and sustaining it by your power, and that we can know and love you, trust and serve you.

We thank you that you loved the world so much that you gave your only Son, so that everyone who has faith in him may not die but have eternal life.

Therefore with all your people in heaven and on earth we sing the triumphant hymn of your glory:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

Holy Lord God, by what we do here in remembrance of Christ we celebrate his perfect sacrifice on the cross and his glorious resurrection and ascension.

We declare that he is Lord of all; and we prepare for his coming in his kingdom.

We pray that through your Holy Spirit this bread may be for us the body of Christ and this wine the blood of Christ.

Accept our sacrifice of praise; and as we eat and drink at his command, unite us to Christ as one body in him and give us strength to serve you in the world.

Let us proclaim the mystery of faith: **Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.**

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name;

Thy kingdom come, Thy 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 Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever.

Amen.

The peace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

The bread we break is the communion of the body of Christ..... (*eat bread*)

The cup of blessing which we bless is the communion of the blood of Christ.... (*drink wine*)

Let us pray

Most gracious God, we praise you for what you have given and for what you have promised us here. Now we give ourselves to you, and we ask that our daily living may be part of the life of your kingdom, and that our love may be your love reaching out into the life of the world, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

HYMN: Judge Eternal

If you would like to sing this hymn, click the icon on the webpage for organ accompaniment.

1 Judge Eternal, throned in splendour,
Lord of lords and King of kings,
with your living fire of judgment
purge this land of bitter things;
solace all its wide dominion
with the healing of your wings.

2 Still the weary folk are pining
for the hour that brings release,
and the city's crowded clangour
cries aloud for sin to cease,
and the homesteads and the woodlands
plead in silence for their peace.

3 Crown, O God, your own endeavour;
cleave our darkness with your sword;
feed the faithless and the hungry
with the richness of your word;
cleanse the body of this nation
through the glory of the Lord.

Henry Scott Holland

BLESSING

Let us pray

Go in peace to serve the Lord.

The blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be with you always.

Amen.