

Opening Music: Celtic Music: 'Nature'

<https://youtu.be/r1IZl43MmQA?>

Welcome and introduction:

Good morning & welcome, whether you are here in person, joining us on Zoom or watching the recording online at a later date. You are welcome, whether a regular attender, have been here a few times and especially so if you are a newcomer. Whatever you bring in your heart: whether you come in sadness, joy or out of curiosity, whatever your faith or none, you are welcome!

Today's Service is offered by the church Green Team, which celebrates its 10th Anniversary this year. GT was set up early in 2015 by Rev Kate Whyman and a small group of church members and friends, including Erna Colebrook, now living in Grassington with her daughter. Our theme this morning is a 'A Climate of Care', celebrating our environment, and why and how we can cherish it.

Firstly, as is our custom, we light our chalice as a symbol of our free religious faith. If you are at home and have a candle nearby, you are welcome to light it with us now.

Chalice lighting: words by Rev Audrey W. Vincent

We light this chalice this morning for earth, our home.

Earth abundant, source of what was before we were and will be after we are gone.

As each cell proves our common destiny, may we know earth, our mother of old, as our friend; as we were bred of dust and stars, may we know her fate as ours.

Blessed are our bonds to the earth,

Blessed are our bonds to all of life,

Blessed are our bonds to the Source of life itself.

Opening words: from the book, 'We light this Chalice'

For the beauty of the earth, this spinning blue green ball, yes!

Gaia, mother of everything,

we walk gently across your back to come together again in this place:

To remember how we can live,

to remember who we are,

to create how we will be.

Gaia, our home, the lap in which we live - welcome us.

1st Hymn: P. 216 'Wide Green World'

Wide green world, we know and love you:

clear blue skies that reach above you,

moon-tugged oceans rising, falling,

summer rain and cuckoo calling.

Some wild ancient ferment bore us,

us and all that went before us:

life in desert, forest, mountain,

life in stream and springing fountain.

2. We know how to mould and tame you,
we have power to mar and maim you.
Show us by your silent growing
that which we should all be knowing:
we are of you, not your master,
we who plan supreme disaster.
If with careless greed we use you
inch by extinct inch we lose you.

3. May our births and deaths remind us
others still will come behind us.
That they also may enjoy you
we with wisdom will employ you.
That our care may always bless you.
teach us we do not possess you.
We are part and parcel of you.
Wide green world, we share and love you.

Tune 'Schmucke Dich' Johann Cruger, 1598 – 1662

Words © June D. Bell b. 1918. Used by permission

Prayers:

1) Prayer for the week's events:

Let us pause to hold in our thoughts & prayers those of our own church community, families and friends and in the wider world, experiencing difficult, sad or worrying times, whether through ill health, accident, human actions or natural causes.

We hold in our thoughts & prayers all whose lives have been changed forever or lost, in conflict, violence and by hunger, many of them vulnerable young families and the elderly, or by plain misfortune, around the world. May those trying to escape these horrors find peaceful sanctuary. May the places to which they flee somehow find the strength and resources to provide what is needed. May those who claim to be the world's leaders be blessed with compassion, and the wisdom to prevent further destruction.

May there be a better outcome for all beings which share our planet.

May we, while being thankful for being spared traumatic events, remember that each one of us will be touched by sad as well as joyful events and may we be moved to offer comfort and solace to one another. May we contribute to and benefit from the resources of love and strength our church community offers, to us and to the wider community outside our doors.
...AMEN

From Edgar: 'Loving Creator, we recognise the sacred bond between humanity and the environment. Help us to understand that our well being is intertwined with the health of the earth. Grant us the wisdom and compassion to protect the environment, realising that it is a reflection of Your divine love. AMEN.'

An Objibway prayer for healing from Erna Colebrook's prayer book:

"Grandfather, look at our brokenness We know that in all Creation, only the human family has strayed from the Sacred Way. We know that we are the ones who are divided, and we are the ones who must come back together to walk in the Sacred Way. Grandfather, Sacred One, teach us love, compassion & honour that we may heal the earth & each other...AMEN"

1st set of Contributions: Setting the scene:

Marianne: Why 'A Climate of Care'?

When we as the Green team were trying to think what to do for this service we decided that there is almost a weariness and a 'I can't take any more of this' reaction when many people hear words such as Climate Crisis, or Climate and Environmental Emergency so we decided

to approach it from a new angle and Delphine had the idea we should switch it round and call our service 'A Climate of Care'.

This got me thinking, do I really know what the noun Care means. I thought I'd check in my 50 year old dictionary and followed that with an online search in case the meaning had morphed but no, it hadn't.

Since the 15 hundreds 'Care' as a noun has meant 'The provision of what is necessary for the health, welfare, maintenance and protection of someone or something'. The verb 'to care' is described as 'to Feel concern or interest for or about someone or something'.

That lead me on to the word 'Climate'; we all know it's first meaning which is 'The weather conditions prevailing in an area or over a long period of time' but I think the second definition of climate works better here, that is 'The prevailing trend of public opinion or other aspects of life' - so, for instance you could say the climate of opinion on racism today is very different to what it was just 50 years ago. So 'A climate of Care' could mean the public opinion today on providing what is necessary for the health, welfare, maintenance and protection of, in this case, our planet Earth -so the current trend in caring for our home, planet Earth.

So do we still have a climate of care for our planet as say aboriginal people had and still do have? Sadly I'm not sure we do. We have been conditioned by advertisers and by our governments to want ever more and more, growth is a word we hear so often coming from our politicians but we know this fictional everlasting growth isn't possible and wouldn't make us happy even if it were. It certainly doesn't help us care for our home

I worry that we no longer have a climate of care in our western industrialised world, we do not put the welfare of our planet and all who live on it before our own 'wants and desires'. If we did we would not be destroying the very thing we all need, a home. Aboriginal people still understand this but we have been lured away largely due to capitalism and this call for continual growth on this finite planet.

A final word or two: - in delving into the meanings of these words I learnt that the original meaning of the noun CARE came from the Old English word caru meaning "grief, anxiety, or sorrow", it conveyed the idea of Lament and of making a sound or crying too. Over time, the meaning shifted to include concepts of providing, protecting, and attention, particularly in the context of affection and concern. So the word care was originally sadness and to me even with its current meaning I feel it retains an undercurrent of its sadness. Words are so interesting!

Sheila: Short Story: Words from the Declaration on Nature from the meeting of leaders of the world faiths in Assissi in 1986 – nearly 40 years ago! :

"At the very beginning of time, humankind accepted responsibility before God for all creation Humankind was commanded to behave towards the rest of creation with justice and compassion Humanity always lives in tension between its power and the limit set by conscience. Some 20 centuries ago, they told a story of 2 men who were out on the water in a rowing boat. Suddenly one of them started to saw through the wood under his feet. He maintained it was his right to do whatever he wished with the place that belonged to him. The other answered him that they were both in the rowing boat together; the hole that he was making would sink them both We have a responsibility to life, to defend it everywhere, not only against our own sins but also those of others..... We are all passengers together in this same fragile and glorious world. Let us safeguard our 'rowing boat' – and let us row together"

2nd Hymn: P. '189 'We celebrate the web of life'

We celebrate the web of life',
its magnitude we sing;
for we can see divinity
in every living thing,

2.A fragment of the perfect whole
in cactus and in quail,
as much in tiny barnacle
as in the great blue whale.

3.Of ancient dreams we are the sum;
our bones link stone to star,
and bind our future worlds to come
with worlds that were and are.

4.Respect the water, land and air
which gave all creatures birth;
protect the lives of all that share
the glory of the earth.

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Music, Tune 'Christus der est mein Leben Melchior Vulpius, c. 1560 - 1616

2nd set of Contributions: Some Concerns

Edgar : From 'The Sabbath Poems' by Wendell Berry

VIII

I go from the woods into the cleared fields:
A place no human made, a place unmade
By human greed, and to be made again.
Where centuries of leaves once built by dying
A deathless potency of light and stone
And mold of all that grew and fell, the timeless
Fell into time. The earth fled with the rain,
The growth of fifty thousand years undone
In a few careless seasons, stripped to rock
And clay – a "new land", truly, that no race
Was ever native to, but hungry mice
And sparrow and the circling hawks, dry thorns
And thistles sent by generosity
Of new beginning. No Eden, this was
A garden once, a good and perfect gift;
Its possible abundance stood in it
As it then stood. But now what it might be
Must be foreseen, darkly, through many lives –
Thousands of years to make it what it was,
Beginning now, in our few troubled days.

Sheila; Earth Overshoot Day: Last Thursday, July 24th marked this year's Earth Overshoot Day. This means that humanity is currently using nature 1.8 times faster than Earth's ecosystems can regenerate it.

This overshoot occurs because people emit more CO₂ than the biosphere can absorb, use more freshwater than is replenished, harvest more trees than can regrow, fish quicker than stocks replenish, etc. This overuse beyond what nature can renew inevitably depletes Earth's natural capital. It compromises long-term resource security, especially for those who already struggle to access the resources needed to operate. But some things can slow or even reverse this.

Looking Ahead

The electrical industry is at the heart of the sustainability conversation. But alongside the challenges posed by overconsumption of natural resources come a range of reasons for optimism.

Customers are asking for solutions that last. Regulations are evolving. The demand for clean energy and responsible systems is growing.

UK's electrical industry is at the heart of a systemic shift, embracing clean power, eg wind and solar, Marine and tidal energy: The UK leads in wave and tidal Research & Development. Studies in Orkney suggest tidal streams could meet up to 11 % of UK power demand. Coupled with innovations in wave converters, these technologies form the bedrock of a diversified, resilient energy supply.

These efforts redefine growth, showing future prosperity can be resource-light, technology-rich, and purpose-driven.

Sheila reads: An Astronaut's perspective: A World Teeming with Life

This is based on an online article which originally appeared on 'The Premier Daily' and was republished with permission.

Ron Garan is a former NASA astronaut, who spent 178 days in space, on the International Space Station (ISS).

His 6 months in space gave him a unique perspective on our planet and he experienced a profound shift in his thinking, known as the 'overview effect.' This involves feelings of awe and a realization of the interconnectedness of all life on Earth. Other astronauts have shared similar sentiments. Michael Collins of Apollo 11 described Earth as "fragile" and "tiny," while Edgar Mitchell of Apollo 14 spoke of an "explosion of awareness" upon seeing Earth from space. These experiences highlight the transformative impact of viewing Earth from space and the urgent need for a collective re-evaluation of our actions.

One of Garan's most striking observations was the thinness of Earth's atmosphere. He described it as "paper-thin" but crucial for sustaining life on the planet. "When I looked out the window of the International Space Station, I saw the unbelievable thinness of our planet's atmosphere," he said. This hit him hard, for him underscoring the fragility of our life-support system.

He also saw Earth as an "iridescent biosphere teeming with life." From space, he couldn't see borders, economies, or other constructs that often dominate human concerns. Instead, he saw a vibrant, interconnected system of life. This view led him to question many of the human priorities and systems that govern life on Earth.

Ron Garan's most significant realization was that humanity is "living a lie." He noted that human-made systems treat everything, including Earth's life-support systems, as subsidiaries of the global economy. "I didn't see the economy," he said. "It's obvious from the vantage point of space that we're living a lie." This perspective suggests that our economic activities often overlook the environmental costs, jeopardizing the planet's health.

Upon his return to Earth, Ron Garan dedicated himself to raising awareness about environmental issues and the interconnectedness of all life. He is a vocal advocate for environmental sustainability and global co-operation. He emphasizes the need to shift our priorities, saying, “We need to move from thinking *economy, society, planet*, to *planet, society, economy*”. This shift is essential for continuing our evolutionary process and ensuring the planet’s well-being.. He believes that “We’re not going to have peace on Earth until we recognize the basic fact of the interrelated structure of all reality,” His message serves as a call to action for individuals and leaders worldwide to rethink their priorities and actions in the context of our fragile and interconnected world.

Despite the challenges, this former astronaut remains hopeful. He believes that humanity can evolve in consciousness and embrace a larger reality. This could lead to a future where we no longer see the world in a two-dimensional “us versus them” mind-set but understand the true multi-dimensional reality of the universe. “That’s when we’re going to no longer be floating in darkness ... and it’s a future that we would all want to be a part of,” Garan concluded.

Time for silent reflection: Video: Forest and birdsong:

3rd set of contributions : Nature as solace and inspiration

Marianne: ‘The Peace of Wild Things’ by Wendell Berry
From The Selected Poems of Wendell Berry (Counterpoint, 1999),
Used here with the author's permission.

When despair for the world grows in me
and I wake in the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and my children’s lives might be,
I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.
I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with forethought
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting with their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

Caroline: Poem ‘The Trees’

I wrote this over 40 years ago after walking alone in a wood on Xmas morning in Devon.

What do they think of me
These gentle sisters?
Is this joy I feel mutual?
Do they gaze, as I do,
With tender awe and
Admiration untold?
If I stayed would they welcome me?
To share unreservedly
Their precious garlands of Ivy and moss.
Would they draw me in and enlighten me,
Their secrets whispered so softly
On this winter’s day?
When I go will they think of me, as I will them
To store and use the memory like a precious balm on a weary soul.

3rd Hymn: G 243 All things bright and beautiful'

*All things bright and beautiful,
All creatures great and small,
All things wise and wonderful –
The Lord God made them all.*

Each little flower that opens,
Each little bird that sings,
God made their glowing colours,
He made their tiny wings.

*All things bright and beautiful,
All creatures great and small,
All things wise and wonderful –
The Lord God made them all.*

The purple-headed mountains,
The river running by,
The sunset and the morning
That brighten up the sky;

*All things bright and beautiful,
All creatures great and small,
All things wise and wonderful –
The Lord God made them all.*

The cold wind in the winter,
The pleasant summer sun,
The ripe fruits in the garden –
God made them, every one.

*All things bright and beautiful,
All creatures great and small,
All things wise and wonderful –
The Lord God made them all.*

The tall trees in the greenwood,
The meadows where we play;
The rushes by the water
We gather every day;

*All things bright and beautiful,
All creatures great and small,
All things wise and wonderful –
The Lord God made them all.*

God gave us eyes to see them,
And lips that we might tell
How great is God Almighty,
Who has made all things well.

*All things bright and beautiful,
All creatures great and small,
All things wise and wonderful –
The Lord God made them all.*

Tune: 'Royal Oak' ; Words: Cecil Frances Alexander nee Humphreys, 1823 - 1895

4th set of Contributions: Spiritual aspects

Edgar : Indigenous beliefs and Green's Significance

'Indigenous beliefs and Green's Spiritual significance' is an extract from a much longer piece of work available at [https:// spiritualityshepherd.com/green-spiritual-meaning](https://spiritualityshepherd.com/green-spiritual-meaning).

"Indigenous cultures around the world have long recognised the spiritual significance of green and its deep connection to nature. Many indigenous traditions view nature as sacred, considering all living beings and ecosystems as interconnected. This perspective fosters a profound respect and responsibility for the Earth.

In indigenous beliefs, green is seen as a symbol of harmony and unity with the natural world. It reflects the understanding that humans are part of a larger ecological web, and their well being is interconnected with the well-being of the planet. This spiritual connection to green and nature inspires indigenous communities to live in harmony with the Earth, practising sustainable and eco-friendly lifestyles.

Various religious and spiritual traditions also emphasise the importance of caring for the environment and preserving the Earth's resources. The Green Bible, published in 2008, highlights passages in the Bible that emphasise the stewardship of the Earth. In Hinduism, organisations like the Bhumi project promote eco-friendly practises and encourage individuals to deepen their spirituality through a connection with the natural world. Similarly, the Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change calls for urgent action to address environmental degradation and recognises humans as stewards of the Earth ('Yes' magazine).

By embracing the spiritual meaning of green and fostering a connection with nature, we can cultivate a deeper appreciation for the Earth and its regenerative powers. This understanding can inspire us to live more sustainable lives and nurture a sense of interconnectedness with all living beings, fostering harmony and balance within ourselves and the world around us."

Sheila: inspired by 'Laudato Si' by Pope Francis - Spiritual aspects of environmentalism

The "ethical and spiritual roots of environmental problems require us to look for solutions not only in technology, but in a change of humanity". So wrote the late Pope Francis when referring to the thinking of the 'Green Patriarch', the Eastern Orthodox Bartholomew*, in his encyclical letter 'Laudato Si'. Thanks to Delphine for making me aware of this work.

In 2015, the late Pope Francis wrote 'Laudato Si' meaning 'Praise be to you', from the Canticle of St Francis. This was in the same year as the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, whose goal "to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels" became international law. It was also the year our church Green Team was set up.

Pope Francis took his Papal name from *Saint* Francis, because he was inspired, like many ecologists and environmentalists, even non- Christian ones, by his well known love and respect for all creation. St Francis was regarded as the example *par excellence* of care for the vulnerable and of an integral ecology lived out joyfully and authentically.

'Laudato Si', is about care for our common home – the Earth. He refers sympathetically to St Francis' communing, with all creation, as sister or brother. This he says, shows what it is to be truly human. Such a conviction, he says will affect the choices we make and determine our behaviour. If we feel intimately united with all that exists, then sobriety and care well up spontaneously. The poverty and austerity of St Francis were no mere veneer of asceticism, but something much more radical: a refusal to turn reality into an object simply to be used and controlled.'

Pope Francis continues 'What is more, St Francis, faithful to Scripture, invites us to see nature as a magnificent book, in which God speaks to us and grants us a glimpse of his infinite

beauty and goodness. Quoting from the book of Wisdom (13:5) 'Through the greatness and beauty of creatures one comes to know by analogy their maker' and from Romans 1:20, 'His eternal power and divinity have been made known through his works since the creation of the world.' For this reason, he writes, St Francis asked that part of the friary garden always be left untouched, so that wild flowers and herbs could grow there. Rather than a problem to be solved, the world is a joyful mystery to be contemplated with gladness and praise."

He continues: "Young people demand change. They wonder how anyone can claim to be building a better future without thinking of the environmental crisis and the sufferings of the excluded We require a new and universal solidarity... all of us can co-operate as instruments of God for the care of creation, each according to his or her own culture, involvements and talents'

Later in the encyclical, he observes that the Genesis accounts of granting 'man' (ie humans) "dominion" over the Earth is not a correct interpretation of the Bible. It should be read in context ...they tell us to "till and keep" the garden of the world. 'Tilling' refers to cultivating, ploughing or working. "Keeping" means caring, protecting, overseeing and preserving, implying a relationship of mutual responsibility between human beings and nature we are called to recognise that other living beings have a value of their own ..

And he referred to the teaching of German bishops: " we speak of the priority of being over that of being useful" Everything, he concludes, is interconnected, and ..genuine care for our own lives and our relationships with nature is inseparable from justice and faithfulness in others"

*Bartholomew, the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, and spiritual leader of the Eastern Orthodox Christians worldwide.

Delphine: Part of an interview by Krista Tippett with Joanna Macy, environmentalist, activist, Buddhist, and author who died last week aged 96.

Interviewer: Something that's very present for me as I'm reading about you and the passion you've had for this (her concern about long-term radioactive contamination through weapons and generating power) is you also were always very aware of a sense of grief as you realized ...

Ms. Macy: Oh, yeah. Grief got me into it.

Interviewer Yeah. And you really work with people to hold on to that, to take their grief seriously, right?

Ms. Macy: Or not to hold on to it so much as to not be afraid of it, because that grief, if you are afraid of it and pave it over, clamp down, you shut down. And the kind of apathy and closed-down denial, our difficulty in looking at what we're doing to our world stems not from callous indifference or ignorance so much as it stems from fear of pain. That was a big learning for me as I was organizing around nuclear power and around at the time of Three Mile Island catastrophe and around Chernobyl.

It relates to everything. It relates to what's in our food, and it relates to the clear-cuts of our forests. It relates to the contamination of our rivers and oceans. So that became, actually, perhaps the most pivotal point in — I don't know — the landscape of my life: that dance with despair, to see how we are called to not run from the discomfort and not not run from the grief or the feelings of outrage or even fear — and that, if we can be fearless, to be with our pain, it turns. It doesn't stay static. It only doesn't change if we refuse to look at it. But when we look at

it, when we take it in our hands, when we can just be with it and keep breathing, then it turns. It turns to reveal its other face, and the other face of our pain for the world is our love for the world, our absolutely inseparable connectedness with all life....

.... So I feel like that. I'm ready to see. I'm not insisting that we be brimming with hope. It's OK not to be optimistic. Buddhist teachings say feeling that you have to maintain hope can wear you out. So just be present. The biggest gift you can give is to be absolutely present. And when you're worrying about whether you're hopeful or hopeless or pessimistic or optimistic, who cares? The main thing is that you're showing up, that you're here, and that you're finding ever more capacity to love this world because it will not be healed without that. That was what is going to unleash our intelligence and our ingenuity and our solidarity for the healing of our world.

That is what keeps me going, Krista. **The Great Turning is a revolution that is underway, the transition to a life-sustaining society — that this is sprouting up in countless ways, new ways of holding the land, new ways of generating energy, new ways of producing food, some of them very old ways that we are going back to, wisdom of the ancestors and of the indigenous people, often, new ways of measuring prosperity and wealth, new ways of handling differences through nonviolent communication, through restorative circles instead of outside the dominant punitive penal system now. There's a tremendous energy.**

4th Hymn: 19: Sing Your Faith (Purple Book) 'Colour and Fragrance '

Colour and fragrance, magical rhythm,
sweet changing music will change us with them:
life within life, inner light gently glowing,
surely you seem to be God's vision growing.

O starry heavens, worlds of all splendour,
suns without number, new life engender:
wheel in a wheel with the light brightly glowing,
moving in harmony, God's vision growing.

Hand full of pebbles, high mountain passes,
depths of the ocean, dew on the grasses:
great things and small, with the light gently glowing,
word of the wordless song, God's vision growing.

Delicate beings, lace wing and sparrow
in field and forest, clover and yarrow:
life greeting life with the light brightly glowing,
none are too small to be God's vision growing.

In human eyes burn the soul of living,
illuminates altars of loving giving:
greeting, we meet, seeing light brightly glowing,
share in a greater life, God's vision growing.

Shaper of all things, to us you've given
Our chance to keep here on earth, a heaven.
Moving in harmony, light gently glowing,
May we be, gratefully, God's vision growing

Closing words: A Yoruba poem from West Africa:

Enjoy the earth gently,
Enjoy the earth gently,
For if it is spoiled
It cannot be repaired
Enjoy the earth gently.

Extinguish Chalice

Closing music/video: 'One World ' song