

Call to Worship (*Psalm 96:11-13*)

Prayer of Approach

We come together now and celebrate our common home
we gather with the family of humanity.

With the mountains, islands and deserts
we honour the glory of God in creation.

With the lakes, rivers and seas
we come to the source of living water.

With the land, its soil, seeds and sustenance
we give thanks for God's generous provision.

With the forests of great trees, the lungs of the planet
we will sing with joy and clap our hands.

We join with the whole of creation, inspired by those who have gone before and the prophetic voices of today

We dare to praise and pray for another possible world.

To the glory of God, **Amen.**

(Adapted from 'We are the Amazon', an ecumenical act of solidarity and justice for the Amazon and its people.)

Hymn: 181 For the beauty of the earth

<https://youtu.be/VUU6jkHh1n8>

Prayer of Confession and the Lord's Prayer

For the beauty of the Earth we bring you our thanksgiving, O Lord...yet the earth is desecrated by pollution, extinguished by forest fires and choked by plastic waste
Lord, we pray for your forgiveness.

Lord, though we know the cause is greed and economic interest we deny, we delay, we procrastinate hoping it will just get better.
Lord, we pray for your forgiveness.

For the joy of human love fractured by forced migration crushed by bereavement lost to typhoons, floods, starvation Christ, our God, bringer of justice forgive us for this climate crisis.

God you know us, you know that we can be loving and kind;
and you know that sometimes we do get things wrong.

We're sorry for the times we hurt other people, forget to listen to you and don't bother to take care of your world.

God forgive us. Jesus bless us. Holy Spirit help us to grow in love we pray and join together now in the prayer that Jesus taught us saying: 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 debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory for ever Amen.

A Reading From Micah 6:1-9

Prayer of Lament

O God, the heavens are not glad, the Earth does not rejoice warming gases fill the atmosphere pollution turns clean air foul climate breakdown wreaks havoc. The sea roars with the grief of all the plastic that fills it and of the destruction of coral reef. The fields exclaim despair for delayed rains and prolonged drought for species extinction on a daily basis. No song of joy rings out from the trees of the forest decimated by forest fires. How long O God, how long until your justice comes for all your creatures and the Earth? In you we put our trust. Amen.

Bible Reading - John 15:9-17 (GNT)

Hymn: 231 For the fruits of all creation

<https://youtu.be/zbBUFSOkbdM>

Christian Aid Week Film [Image Store \(resourcespace.com\)](https://resourcespace.com)

Reflection

Today marks the start of Christian Aid week. You all know about Christian Aid because we have thought about Christian Aid and the work they do every year that I have been your minister here – and that's over 7 years now. Our reading from John's Gospel sets the scene for the week: My commandment is this: love one another, just as I love you. Jesus said these words just after sharing the last supper with his disciples and they are part of

a long parting speech in which he encourages the disciples to abide in the love of God and to share that love with one another. The sacrificial love that they are to have for one another will get them through the dark days after his death and will form them as a community.

It is not duty, obligation or command that will enable them to remain faithful and bear lasting fruit. It is love, friendship and joy. It is this kind of love that means we can be generous in giving to Christian Aid for they will share the money that we give in a way that will bring love and joy to others in need.

It's easier sometimes to give - and to stand beside people in solidarity when we know more about the people that receive the help and so we heard Florence's story and you can hear more stories on the C A website.

Jesus spoke of joy even though he knew the terrible suffering that awaited him. Christian Aid Week does not lead us away from suffering and struggle, but towards it. We choose to look towards the pain and see the possibilities for transformation. Jesus goes on to explain to the disciples that even pain will turn to a joy that no one can remove (*John 16:20-22*).

It was transformation that the prophets like Micah wanted to bring about as they foretold what would happen if the people did not return to God's ways, if they did not have a thought for their actions and a love for other people and for just practices.

The prophets like Micah offer people an alternative vision of the future in which the earth might be a different and better place and they ask the people to live that envisioned world into a reality.

This year Christian Aids' focus on balancing the scales of justice moves beyond economics and a just sharing of the world's resources to loom, at the underlying issue of climate change.

Micah names and shames the corruption of the political leaders of his day, the dishonesty of the merchants and greed of those who control the use of land. He denounces their exploitation and oppression of the people and of the land, he sees these social

injustices as a kind of idolatry as misplaced worship and devotion to greed that the religious leaders of his day have allowed to happen.

Some people deny it, but the effects of climate change are all around us even in this country but even more drastically so in other countries across the world. Of course, this isn't a punishment from God but is the result of the behaviour of mankind and of those who want to exploit the earth and its people in the pursuit of power and wealth. These harmful actions mostly originate in the wealthier nations, but have the most dire impact on the poorest people on our planet – people in places like the Philippines, Kenya, Bolivia, Bangladesh and El Salvador.

Katalina Tahaafe-Williams, a theologian writing from Australia and the Pacific Islands wrote this:

'Only the willingly ignorant continue to deny the link between our consumerist lifestyles, climate change, and suffering in the developing world. Promoting economic growth as the answer to all our problems, and in particular global poverty, is irresponsible. We need to recognise that our current growth-oriented system is driven by powerful economic interests set on making profits, however short term.

'... And it is just plain wrong to ignore the suffering of the poorest and most vulnerable populations in the world especially when they are the least contributors to climate change.'

Micah 6:8 says: 'what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?' How do we do justice? How can we help those worst affected yet least responsible for the climate crisis? You could stand in solidarity beside them joining with their voices in the call for climate justice and sign a petition of the Christian Aid website.

How do we do justice to the earth? We need to acknowledge that the raging fires, flooding rivers, devastating typhoons and species extinction are a result of exploitation and neglect of the natural rhythms of our planet and we need to learn instead, how to live in harmony.

How do we love kindness or mercy, as it is in some translations? God requires us to embody loving mercy and kindness. We have to act with compassion for our wounded creation and its hurting people but it also means we need to challenge the powers that be and those who continue to reject the radical changes that are needed for a climate crisis to be averted.

It is to believe with hope that perhaps even the most ardent climate change-denying politician, or the most active carbon-emitting company has the potential to change.

How do we walk humbly with God? This means turning to God in prayer, in continuous and collective prayer for the planet and its peoples. Christian Aid invites you to join a prayer chain where Christians across Britain, Ireland and the world will share their prayers. Once again details of this are on the C A website. In joining with sisters and brothers across the world in prayer, we remind ourselves that the Earth is the Lord's, and everything in it. In seeking and spending time with God in prayer we find the courage and support we need to do justice and to love mercy as we respond to the challenge and join in the mission of God in bringing shalom peace And wholeness to the whole of creation. Amen

Saying Yes (*Iona Community Worship Book, 2017*).

Because we are God's people,

we will care for each other.

Because we are part of God's creation,

we will care for the Earth.

Because we are loved by God,

we will share God's love with everyone.

Prayers for Others:

God of abundant life,

we see your goodness all around us and we thank you for every part of it; from the plants and animals which play their part in complex ecosystems, to the dry deserts and stormy seas which test the limits of life.

We pray that in this time of climate crisis and ecological emergency, you may help us to rediscover your love of creation and to reflect that in our own lives.

God who speaks through unexpected people,
We thank you for today's prophets who are challenging us to act on climate change;
for indigenous people and their invaluable knowledge of the land and sea where they live,
for scientists dedicating their careers to warning us about changes to the planet,
and for young people striking for their future.
We pray that you will help those in power to hear their prophetic voices.

Help them to see beyond short-term political priorities and business plans and give them wisdom and courage when they face difficult decisions.

God of second chances,
we recognise the damage we have done to the Earth and the injustice we see in society every day,
all of it fuelled by worship of profit and possessions.
We pray for the coming of a better world with justice, kindness and humility at its heart.

We ask that you guide us to be co-creators of this new world.
Give us confidence to follow the prophetic voices to stand against injustice to people and to our planet.
So that together, in your strength, we stop this climate crisis.
God, in your mercy
hear our prayer. Amen

Hymn: 804 You shall go out with joy
<https://youtu.be/gJeTbPoiNm0>