

Jubilee of the Earth

Be transformed – Season of Creation



Gathering

Create a space for worship - perhaps with a small table with a bible, cross and candle. This week, it would be appropriate to find a green cloth or scarf to signify that we are now in a time of “growing”. Start by lighting the Christ candle. The candle helps to centre us. Take some deep breaths as you gather your thoughts towards God.

A video of this service can be found here: <https://vimeo.com/454639101/62dc01ad5a>

Welcome and introduction

Welcome to the service today. Through the support of Common Grace, our church is participating in Season of Creation for the whole of September.

Season of Creation is a global annual celebration that is held during this month and encourages us to celebrate God’s beautiful Earth, and renew our shared commitment to preserving and restoring that beauty. For the liturgical amongst us, this is called the Season of Creation. During the Season of Creation, we unite as followers of Jesus, celebrating the bonds we share with each other and with “every living creature on Earth.”

Common Grace is a growing movement of thousands of Australian Christians passionate about Jesus and Justice. Common Grace focuses on four key justice areas - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander justice, justice for people seeking asylum and refugees, domestic and family violence, and of course, creation and climate justice. Common Grace invites us to celebrate this season by spending time in prayer, considering ways to inhabit our common home sustainably, and lifting our voices in the public sphere.

This year, the global theme for the season is “Jubilee for the Earth”.

Jubilee is a time to renounce overconsumption and economic systems based on constant economic growth at the cost of the Earth and those experiencing injustice. Jubilee is a time when those who have consumed the most must make restitution to those who have suffered the most. Jubilee is a time of rest for the land from constant exploitation, to restore ecosystems and peoples.

The concept of Jubilee is rooted in the holy wisdom that there must exist a just and sustainable balance between social, economic and ecological realities. When one variable is exploited to maximize growth of another, the whole system will eventually suffer. When one part of the Earth community is stressed, every part is affected. In 2020, the global pandemic has demonstrated this reality on a global scale. While the experience of living with COVID-19 points back to this need to maintain justice, the lessons that we learn may point us towards the need for a Jubilee and motivate us to restore balance to the very systems that sustain life.

Season of Creation 2020 is an opportunity to reflect on the meaning of Jubilee today, especially how we, as individuals, Christians and followers of Jesus, and as the Church recognise our total dependence on God and God’s creation and uphold God’s intention to see the flourishing of the whole of creation.

Call to Worship

People of God, open your eyes!

Look around!

The presence of our Lord Jesus Christ is here — among us and within us.

God’s salvation is close at hand—

nearer than you know.

So open your hearts and minds to the Spirit, and let’s worship God together!

Acknowledgement of Country

We recognise the stewardship of the Wodi Wodi people of the Dharawal nation for the land on which we gather today.

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1sl2YZDgmoljFFvyB_I3pbErRdNu6twnr/view?usp=sharing

Jubilee for the Earth – A prayer for creation and climate justice

By Monique Hughes

Heavenly Father, Creator God,

We thank and praise you for your good gift of creation. For your rivers, mountains, soils, skies and seas that sustain life, bring joy and heal.

We marvel at the diversity and wondrous complexity of life you have called by name. The beauty of relationship between all you have made, designed to live and flourish together.

We thank you Father God for calling us into relationship with you, commissioned to care for your good creation. To nurture, protect and join with all creation in singing your praise.

We ask your forgiveness Lord for our failure to love your creation as you do. For our complicit actions and complacent hearts that have chosen profit over protection. For our desire for comfort over concern and compassion for others. For our refusal to heed the warnings given to us over and over again. For our failure to acknowledge our total dependence on you Lord.

In a warming world, witness to floods, droughts, heat waves and fires we cry out Father God. We seek your holy wisdom of a Jubilee for the Earth. For rest and renewal of the relationship between us and all your creation. For your land to be healed, balance returned and the precious diversity of your creation sustained.

Lord, we ask you for courage to take up our cross and follow you. We pray that we would not be overcome by a spirit of despair. That we would not grow weary or feel overwhelmed by the work ahead. Instead Father God we ask you to awaken your church with a spirit of hope, a spirit of courage and a spirit of love. We pray you would embolden us to speak out for justice for our vulnerable neighbours, our children, future generations and all your creation.

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

Ephesians 3:20-12

Sing – How great thou art

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a-m_6KN5ISA&feature=youtu.be

1. O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder
Consider all the worlds Thy hands have made
I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder
Thy power throughout the universe displayed

*Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to Thee
How great Thou art, how great Thou art
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to Thee
How great Thou art, how great Thou art!*

2. When through the woods, and forest glades I wander
And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees
When I look down, from lofty mountain grandeur
And see the brook, and feel the gentle breeze
Then sings my soul...

3. And when I think, that God, His Son not sparing
Sent Him to die, I scarce can take it in
That on the Cross, my burden gladly bearing
He bled and died to take away my sin
Then sings my soul...

4. When Christ shall come, with shout of acclamation
And take me home, what joy shall fill my heart
Then I shall bow, in humble adoration
And then proclaim: "My God, how great Thou art!"
Then sings my soul...

Listening for God's Voice

Leviticus 25:1-13, 23 (NRSV)

The LORD spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai, saying: ² Speak to the people of Israel and say to them: When you enter the land that I am giving you, the land shall observe a sabbath for the LORD. ³ Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard, and gather in their yield; ⁴ but in the seventh year there shall be a sabbath of complete rest for the land, a sabbath for the LORD: you shall not sow your field or prune your vineyard. ⁵ You shall not reap the aftergrowth of your harvest or gather the grapes of your unpruned vine: it shall be a year of complete rest for the land. ⁶ You may eat what the land yields during its sabbath—you, your male and female slaves, your hired and your bound laborers who live with you; ⁷ for your livestock also, and for the wild animals in your land all its yield shall be for food.

⁸ You shall count off seven weeks of years, seven times seven years, so that the period of seven weeks of years gives forty-nine years. ⁹ Then you shall have the trumpet sounded loud; on the tenth day of the seventh month—on the day of atonement—you shall have the trumpet sounded throughout all your land. ¹⁰ And you shall hallow the fiftieth year and you shall proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you: you shall return, every one of you, to your property and every one of you to your family. ¹¹ That fiftieth year shall be a jubilee for you: you shall not sow, or reap the aftergrowth, or harvest the unpruned vines. ¹² For it is a jubilee; it shall be holy to you: you shall eat only what the field itself produces.

¹³ In this year of jubilee you shall return, every one of you, to your property.

²³ The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine; with me you are but aliens and tenants.

1 Timothy 6:6-11 (NRSV)

⁶ You gain a lot when you live a godly life. But you must be happy with what you have. ⁷ We didn't bring anything into the world. We can't take anything out of it. ⁸ If we have food and clothing, we will be happy with that. ⁹ People who want to get rich are tempted. They fall into a trap. They are tripped up by wanting many foolish and harmful things. Those who live like that are dragged down by what they do. They are destroyed and die. ¹⁰ Love for money causes all kinds of evil. Some people want to get rich. They have wandered away from the faith. They have wounded themselves with many sorrows.

¹¹ But you are a man of God. Run away from all these things. Try hard to do what is right and godly. Have faith, love and gentleness. Hold on to what you believe.

Matthew 6:24-33 (NRSV)

²⁴ "No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

²⁵ "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷ And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? ²⁸ And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹ yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. ³⁰ But if God

so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? ³¹ Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?' ³² For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. ³³ But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Hear what God's Spirit is saying to the church.

Thanks be to God!

Reflection

Season of Creation – Jubilee for the earth

There is a great slogan being used, particularly by students, as they promote climate action – "There is no Planet B". It is a spoof on people having a "Plan B". So if there is no Planet B, what about this one?

The Earth sits on the edge of a spiral galaxy known as the Milky Way, it is literally in a backwater, away from the powerful forces at the centre of the galaxy, which form or devour stars and create new planets. Our planet is tucked safely into a quiet part of the galaxy with our own sun and a set of other orbiting planets, moons, comets and asteroids. We can view constellations of stars and other galaxies but we are far enough away that we are relatively stable and safe.

There is an enormity about what we view in the night sky that is both wonderful and terrifying. Are we alone in the universe? Is there another planet somewhere, like ours? More than these wandering questions, the night sky offers us something changing, heavenly bodies cycling through seasons of rising and falling, orbiting towards us and away from us. The night sky, seen from Earth, offers us a glimpse into the wild potential for human exploration but at the same time Earth is the one thing everyone, everything shares...there is no Planet B.

So, if this is our only possible home, how do we care for it? How do we get from it what we need to live and flourish? How do we share what the resource the earth holds? What priority should the sharing take? Do human inhabitants take precedence over every other living things?

The month of September is the Season of Creation and this year we will share the world wide theme of "Jubilee for the Earth".

Jubilee is a word which describes a period of holiness, and in the reading from Leviticus, we read about Hebrew people working for 6 years and in the 7th year, or sabbath year, resting, restoring and reconciling what had been worked; people, animals and the earth. Across 50 years there would be seven sabbath years culminating in a jubilee year, a holy year of returning to one's roots, where families began in the Promised Land, after God rescued them from slavery.

For us, in the 21st century, the concept of jubilee is not easy. In Australia, as in most parts of the world, land is owned, worked and exploited for its worth and value. Jubilee calls for a halt to the abuse of resources (people, animals and land) and invites us to return to our roots and share the resources with all, especially the poor, oppressed and those alien to the land. There are very important and complex realities within this statement.

In 1 Timothy, Paul writes to reminds him that if we are fed and clothed, then that should be enough, we are content. He wrote this at a time when, beyond the first enthusiasm of their baptism, followers lost their energy, got caught up in doctrines which weren't about the words of the witnesses to Jesus but rather what people thought they should be and should become.

This letter was written to church leaders as encouragement to understand the temptation which comes from striving for things which are of this world but not of God. Paul shares with them the risk to themselves, of those who seek only wealth, even as it is wealth for sharing. We see that even in our own community today, people striving for success and riches with little regard for the how that success and wealth will be achieved.

And its implications for us are surprisingly close. If we have food and clothing, we will be content (v 8). Where did the food come from and where were the clothes made? Leviticus reminds us that the land is not ours but God's and there must be time for the earth to rest, for us to restore to the earth what it needs to continue to provide for us, and that becomes an issue for us, together and individually.

Over the next month we will get to explore how to let the earth rest and restore itself but this is not just a call to 'those out there', this is a call to each of us to play our part. And it begins with what we demand of the earth.

Every Monday morning, I demand that the earth accepts my rubbish in landfill. I expect my bin, full of plastic, dirty wrappers and empty and broken objects to be picked up from my front kerb and dumped into a local tip. How does the earth restore itself while I keep dumping into it stuff it can't process, things that can blow away into the oceans or find their way into the river systems?

Jesus tells us in Matthew's reading, what living in the light and strength of Jesus Christ, in God's world, should be like...don't worry about your life, what you eat or drink, or about your body what you will wear...but seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well.

Seek the kingdom, on Earth as in Heaven. What responsibility does that mean for us when we seek the kingdom, here on Planet Earth?

Over the next few weeks we will have the opportunity to listen to those who come with extensive knowledge and experience about what it means to see the earth, and all of God's creation, as our present home, to hear of how Indigenous peoples across the world but particularly in Australia, have lived and relied on God's bounty provided. What lessons do they offer us, not unlike Paul's letter to Timothy? We may need to look closely at what we think about our own behaviours and attitudes. This is especially true in the use or exploitation of people, animals and the land, to meet our ever-expanding demands for comfort, even luxury, in what we want, which seems always far more than what we need. We need to listen, learn, pray and act for this planet is our home. Amen.

Responding

Sing – All things bright and beautiful

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IPMA5I3-0Jw&feature=youtu.be>

Author: Cecil F. Alexander, Hymns for Little Children, 1848

Prayer for others – Rhonda Back

Loving God

Bless your people throughout the world with your healing and peace. No matter the names and nationalities, races and religions we call ourselves, we are yours. We give you thanks that you teach us your ways of forgiveness and reconciliation.

Hear our prayers for all in these difficult COVID 19 times

- For those who have been made redundant and those who cannot find work
- For those whose needs are ignored and those who can't care for themselves
- For those struggling with loneliness and weighted down by the burdens of life
- For ourselves and each other, for our families, friends and neighbours.

Open our eyes to recognise you among us who are forgotten and despairing. Enlarge our hearts to love each other, to love our neighbours and to love our enemies as friends.

We give thanks that you have revealed yourself to us in your Son, hear our prayers for your church, its clergy and its people.

We pray for

- Those places where your church has lost its vision
- Those places where your church is struggling to survive but stands firm in the face of injustice and persecution
- For all ministers and clergy and those responsible for keeping the church alive via technology at this difficult time of shutdown and isolation.

Open our eyes to recognise You among us wherever two or three gather together in your name.

We give thanks that you heal the sick and go in search of those who have lost their way.

Hear our prayers for all in need –

- For those whose lives are ruled by addiction to alcohol, drugs, gambling, or materialism
- For those who have lost all purpose in life
- For the sick and dying, all who devote their time ministering to them
- For those suffering from depression and loneliness

Open our hearts to recognise you among us who are sick and suffering

May we daily be mindful, not only of the needs of others in this COVID 19 world but those of ourselves, taking time to be still, rest from our busyness, and surrounded by your love, breath in your peace, God of wholeness. Amen

Offering

In responding to what we have read and how we have heard God speak to us, we commit ourselves to moving with God's Spirit, breathing life in the world around us. If you make a regular financial contribution to the Kiama-Jamberoo Congregation, consider putting that amount aside now and keeping it safe.

Leviticus 27:30–34

Every tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the trees, is the Lord's; it is holy to the Lord.

Thank you, God, that you provide for us and now we can provide for others, through your bounty. Accept these our offerings of money, time and efforts as acceptable. Bless these gifts to your kingdom and to your glory.

Amen.

Sending out

Notices:

Keep an eye on the website, Facebook page and the e-news for updates. If you hear of or notice anyone needing a bit of extra support, please let Kath, Janice, or one of the Elders or Pastoral Partners know.

Benediction and Blessing

Written by Brooke Prentis

May our footsteps, on these ancient lands,
remind us of creation and connectedness, in our search for truth.
May the Gum Tree, from its roots to its branches,
remind us to dig deep and reach high, in our action for justice.
May the Eagle, who soars in the sky,
remind us of the power, in our call for love.
May the expanse of the lands and seas, of the sky and stars,
remind us of God's timing in our faith in hope.
May the Holy three, Creator Spirit, Lord God, Papa Jesus,
remind us of community.
Now with grace, mercy, and peace, go in truth, justice, love and hope.
Amen.

Today's message from Brooke Prentis and Dr Bryon Smith

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1pvTA9zn2SP0CGRDZnnPkOm74yh_Pjgjh/view?usp=sharing