

MODULE  
2

# eco-congregation

an environmental toolkit for churches

## Celebrating creation

ideas and resources  
for worship



an A Rocha uk project

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# Getting started

## What does worship have to do with the environment?

**Worship is an opportunity to celebrate God's gift of creation, reflect on our relationship with God's world, confess our failings as a society to care for it, and dedicate ourselves to honouring God in its restoration.**

### How do we do it?

#### **Celebrate creation time**

Creation Time runs from 1 September to Harvest Festival. You can mark all of it or pick one Sunday within it for a special environmental service. Originally begun by the European Orthodox church, Creation Time is increasingly incorporated into church calendars all over the world.

In Britain Churches Together in Britain and Ireland is encouraging all churches to observe it, with the support of Eco-Congregation and other Christian Environmental organisations. Special Creation Time materials including sermon notes, prayers and discussion notes are produced every year:

- resources especially for UK churches are available at [www.ctbi.org.uk/10](http://www.ctbi.org.uk/10)
- resources collected from around Europe at [www.ecen.org](http://www.ecen.org)
- alternatively, design your own worship, eg: exploring one theme every Sunday in Creation Time, using this module and your own imagination.

#### **Incorporate environmental issues throughout the year**

There are lots of other opportunities to explore environmental issues in worship, for example:

- On church days such as Fair Trade Sunday, Christian Aid Week.
- On environmental days like World Environment Day (6 June), World Wetlands Day (2 February) or European Mobility Week (16–22 September) – see the Eco-Congregation Newsletter for ideas.
- In ordinary worship by ensuring environmental issues are regularly included in intercessions, sermons etc.
- In outdoor worship: a service in the churchyard, or a pilgrimage.



**Become aware  
of environmental  
themes in  
'ordinary'  
worship**

An environmental service does not have to disrupt the existing pattern of worship. If your church follows a lectionary for readings, ask what new insights does the environmental crisis give us into the passage set for today? An internet search for 'ecology lectionary' will provide lots of ideas.

Holy Communion and its traditional liturgies are full of ecological resonances, and the traditional church year is full of opportunities for environmental themes for example:

- Lent: live simply and confess our part in environmental destruction
- Easter, Ascension, and Pentecost are opportunities for outdoor worship
- Christmas is a time to explore consumerism, and God's relationship to his earth.





# An anthology

**Here are just a small selection of prayers and reflections produced by Eco-Congregation churches. Much more is available on the internet: if you like a particular item the author's website will often provide more similar material. The materials are organised around seven environmental themes:**

- Light and power
- Air and sky
- Water and ocean
- Land and food
- Life and biodiversity
- Humans and the environment
- The need for restraint.

These themes and the thematic prayers are taken from *Praying for the Earth*, © 2008 Revd Dr Rob Kelsey and the Advisory Group on the Environment, The Diocese of Newcastle in the Church of England, [Robert@josephkelsey.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:Robert@josephkelsey.fsnet.co.uk). They can be used individually as themes for a service, or as a cycle of daily prayer through the week.

## Light and power

We thank you for brother sun, sister moon and the stars. We give thanks for the rhythm of the days, months and years. Help us to value both light and darkness. Grant us wisdom in the use of energy supplies, and inspiration in the development of renewable resources.

**God said, 'Let there be light ... Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to be for signs and for seasons.' Genesis 1.3, 14**

### REFLECTION **Oil**

In the Bible, the oil used was olive oil. It heals and blesses, soothes and confers honour. It is used for joyful offerings, not sin offerings: in Lev 5:7 'for a sin offering you shall not put oil on it'. The Good Samaritan 'bandaged his wounds and poured oil and wine on them'. The oil at George VI's coronation in 1937 is in the Thackray Medical Museum in Leeds and is made of orange oil, roses, cinnamon and ambergris (from whales). In 651 AD St Aidan of England gave Ulfu oil to pour on troubled waters when he was caught in a storm near Kent while fetching Eanfleda as wife for King Oswy; he did so – and the storm abated. (Bede Bk III ch XV) Oil was sacred,



cherished, rare and special. Today oil is vital for producing medicines (James 5:14. 'Pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord'). But we incinerate it. And it will last only another 100 years, by which time the risks to the climate will be enormous.

## A play for today

**Let us imagine a conversation between the Creator and St Francis about oil.**

**Creator** Fran, I'd like your help. I created oil a little while in the past – I started 300 million years ago if I remember rightly. It was a sort of 'stored sun' for my humans.

**Fran** Ye-es, Lord.

**Creator** I had made all oil holy and precious so that it lasted for aeons: they used olive oil to anoint Kings and Queens in their coronations as I encouraged Samuel to do to Saul. So they were very careful with oil. But now, helped by my creative spirit, the humans of all tribes have learned to burn mineral oil big-time – particularly to move about, I see. I made them nomads, wanderers, so I suppose I should not complain. But I do not understand ...

**Fran** What about, Lord? I thought you knew everything.

**Creator** Yes, but I gave humans the ability to decide things for themselves. They seem to be doing so much moving about that just looking at their traffic makes me dizzy. I gave them two legs – which move them about effectively, but which take up very little space on the ground ...

**Fran** That was a neat solution to the problem of locomotion, if I may say so, Lord.

**Creator** Quite ... Now where was I before you interrupted? Ah yes. They have now got these cars which have four wheels and take up twenty times as much space as their feet. They get in a car on their own: what about sharing the thing? Then they complain there are 'traffic jams'. I have rarely seen a human traffic jam in a street full of people; it is only when the roads are full of their infernal machines with all those wheels.

**Fran** You will like this bit, Lord. In London the people **pay** extra so that they **can** drive in all that congestion ... But seriously Lord, they have to get about fast to do business. Feet are not fast.

**Creator** Traffic jams are not fast either. Why, I see millions of the creatures sitting in their cars going nowhere in a traffic jam but burning up my precious oil – don't they ever think how long that took to make? With all these wheels driven by oil, there will soon be none of my wonderful stored sun left. It took me 300 million years



to make and by my reckoning they will take 300 years to use it all! A million times as fast as I made it! And I am supposed to be God ...

- Fran** Er, Lord, have you seen a mobile home?
- Creator** Yes I think so. Why?
- Fran** When the humans have lovely houses with gardens, they then sometimes buy a moving home. It is a house on four wheels. Then they leave their real home empty and take out their mobile home so that they can get stuck in a traffic jam.
- Creator** Ridiculous. Why on earth do they do that?
- Fran** I think we may call it the 'snail syndrome', Lord: make sure you take your home everywhere with you, but take it slowly ... Anyway, Lord, they have what they call an 'oil-based economy'. That means that their movements, their medicines, and their clothes, for example, are all based on oil.
- Creator** If so much is derived from oil, you would think that they would be careful with the stuff. But no, I have seen them using the oil in the most profligate manner to lift themselves up in the air just for fun! They go and lie in the sun and then fly back – all for a few pounds in the money of the British tribe. Since I cannot make oil fast enough to keep up with their profligate usage, how will they live in a hundred years time?
- Fran** Well Lord, the British have not got much sun ... you did not give them much ... remember? So they fly to the sun as often as possible.
- Creator** I understand ... so these 'wise' creatures are using up the substance that keeps their society going. They are doing it so quickly that their children will not be able to live as they do. I sent my Son to teach them that that sort of selfishness led to disaster. And he was down there only just recently – 2000 earth years ago. Have they forgotten so soon?
- Fran** Well, Lord, they do know the oil is running out. They are always talking about it.
- Creator** Hah ... meetings. We don't have those up here. I just get on with things. What are they doing about it?
- Fran** Nothing much, I am afraid, Lord. They have no idea how they will fly planes without oil. They can sail ships with your wind and make electricity with your sun. They know these things but they seem to love their wheels so much that they cannot walk, still less run, towards the future.
- Creator** My poor, poor, tribes of humankind. When will they learn to look beyond next week with that clever brain I gave them? They want everything NOW; they forget what happens next. I hope the spirit of my Son and his teaching is strong enough to save them while there is hope. I do not despair.

John D Anderson © 2006 dumelama2000@yahoo.co.uk



## Air and sky

'We thank you for the air that we breathe and for the ever-changing skies. We give thanks for the rhythm of the seasons, for the warmth of the summer sun and the sharpness of the winter frost. Help us to feel the freshness of the breeze upon our faces and to discern the rainbow of hope that you give us.'

**God said, 'Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters.' ... God called the dome Sky.**

Genesis 1.6, 8

### REFLECTION

### Clouds



... the first chapter of Genesis is in every respect clear and intelligible to the simplest reader ...

The nineteenth-century writer John Ruskin saw industry and urbanisation as a spiritual problem, in that it separated people from the natural world where God is revealed. But there is one piece of nature which can be seen everywhere. In this passage he suggests to his readers that they take another look at clouds.

'The account given of the stages of creation in the first chapter of Genesis is in every respect clear and intelligible to the simplest reader, except in the statement of the work of the second day. Now with respect to this whole chapter, we must remember always that it is intended for the instruction of all mankind, not for the learned reader only, and that therefore the most simple and natural interpretation is the likeliest in general to be the true one. An unscientific reader knows little about the manner in which the atmosphere surrounds the earth; but I imagine that he could hardly glance at the sky when rain was falling in the distance, and see the level line of the bases of the clouds from which the shower descended, without being able to attach an instant and easy meaning to the words "expansion in the midst of the waters" and perceive that the level line of their bases did indeed most severely divide "waters from waters" – that is to say, divide the waters which fall, and flow, from those which rise, and float.

'Next, if we try this interpretation in the theological sense of the word heaven, we find God going before the Israelites in a pillar of cloud; revealing himself as a cloud on Sinai; appearing in a cloud on the mercy-seat; filling the Temple of Solomon with the cloud; appearing in a great cloud to Ezekiel; ascending into a cloud before the eyes of the disciples on Mount Olivet; and in like manner returning to judgment: "Then shall they see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven". While, further, the "clouds" and "heavens" are used as interchangeable words in those psalms which most distinctly set forth the power of God: "The clouds poured out water, the skies sent out a sound, the voice of thy thunder was in the heaven". We are too apt to take them merely for sublime and vague imagery, and therefore gradually to lose their life and power. But understand by the "heavens" the veil of clouds above the earth, and the expression is neither hyperbolic or obscure; it describes God, not as revealing himself in any peculiar way to David, but doing what he is doing before our own eyes, day by day. By accepting the words in their simple sense, we are thus led to apprehend the immediate presence of the Deity.



'This conception of God, which is the child's, is evidently the only one which can be universal, and, therefore, the only one which for us can be true. The moment that, in our pride of heart, we refuse to accept the condescension of the Almighty, hoping that, by standing on a grain of dust or two of human knowledge higher than our fellows, we may behold the Creator as he rises – God takes us at our word. He goes forth upon the ways which are not our ways, and retires into the thoughts which are not our thoughts; and we are left alone. And presently we say in our vain hearts, "There is no God".

'It seems to me that in the midst of the material nearness of these heavens, God meant us to acknowledge his own immediate presence as visiting, judging and blessing us. "In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun," which, without the firmament, would be seen but as an intolerable and scorching circle in the blackness of vacuity. By the firmament of clouds the temple is built, for the sun's presence to fill with light at noon; by the firmament of clouds the purple veil is closed at evening, round the sanctuary of his rest; by the mists of the firmament his implacable light is divided, and its separated fierceness appeased into the soft blue that fills the depth of distance with its bloom, and the flush with which the mountains burn, as they drink the overflowing of the dayspring. And in this tabernacling of the unendurable sun with men, through the shadows of the firmament, God would seem to set forth the stooping of his own Majesty to men, upon the throne of the firmament. And all those passages to and fro of fruitful showers and grateful shade, and all those visions of silver palaces built about the horizon, and voices of moaning winds and threatening thunders, and glories of coloured robe and cloven ray, are but to deepen in our hearts the acceptance, and distinctness, and dearness of the simple words, "Our Father, which art in heaven".'

John Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, vol 4, chap 6 (1856)

## Water and ocean

'We thank you for the life-giving waters of the earth. We give thanks for the rains that bring refreshment to the dry land and succour to living things. Help us to see your peace in the still waters, your power in the flood and the crashing wave, your joy in the babbling brook, and your timeless presence in the cascading water.'

**God said, 'Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place.'**

Genesis 1.9

### REFLECTION **Water**

In the bible, God controls chaotic waters (Genesis 1, Mark 4), offers the gift of rain (Deuteronomy 28, James 5), rescues us from the dangerous sea (Psalm 107, Acts 27) and cleanses us through ritual bathing (Mark 1, John 5). God brings life and death to the desert through water or lack of it. (Exodus 14, 17). Rivers and cups alike bring



refreshment and quench our parched mouths (Isaiah 35, Romans 12). Water is also a metaphor for love (Psalm 87), peace (Isaiah 66), and sorrow (Psalm 42).

No fresh water has flowed out of the Sea of Galilee into the lower River Jordan since 1991. Where John the Baptist probably baptised Jesus is now a sewage seep.

Globally water is under pressure from commoditisation, poor management and climate change.

## Things to do

- Hold up a litre of bottled water. This costs about the same price as petrol. Imagine the church filled with ten thousand bottles of water: that's how much tap water you can get for the same price. How is this bottle made? How does it get into shops? It is made of enough oil to light a 100W-equivalent energy saving bulb for 48 hours. Ten per cent are recycled: the rest will spend 450 years in a landfill site. Why don't we drink tap water?
- Take the collection in umbrellas, and buckets carried on girls' heads, and pour it into a 'well' for dedication.
- Incorporate the evocative taste of salt water into confession, representing tears of sorrow.

The European Christian Environmental Network Water working group (<http://www.ecen.org/cms/index.php?page=water>) provides information and resources.

## The sea

The creation stories of many peoples speak of the sea as the beginning place



The volume of all the seas put together is more than 10 times that of the land above sea level, and nearly three quarters of the surface of the earth is covered by sea. It's a beginning place: for nearly seven eighths of the history of life on earth, life was confined to the sea. Of 37 different major groups of animals, 25 are found only in the sea and only two are not found in the sea. One of these is the insects, many of which still spend some or most of their lives in water. Life is really at home in the sea: we still have sea water in our veins. Many land animals have returned to it: otters, seals, dolphins and whales among the mammals and also many birds spend nearly all their lives at sea: gannets, puffins, pelicans.

The sea is the source of the water cycle and the weather, keeping us warm in winter and cool in summer. Wherever the rocks are shale or sandstone, land was created by the sea. The creation stories of many peoples around the world speak of the sea as the beginning place.

It is also an ending place. No sooner has some dry land emerged from the sea but the forces of erosion get to work to return it there. Traditionally, Sea Sunday has focused on 'those in peril on the sea' and for many a vessel and for many a seaman the sea has been very literally an ending place.

There is something about the sea which both attracts and frightens us. In God's rebuke to Job, God uses the sea as the first example of the limitations of human



understanding and abilities. We now have a better understanding of the transience of things than did the author of the Book of Job. We now know that even oceans and continents come and go in the grand pageant of the story of the Earth. And we can and should acknowledge the sea as both the beginning place and the ending place of just about everything that happens on the Earth.

From a reflection by Michael Colebrook, Cornwood and Sparkwell, South Dartmoor  
[www.greenspirit.org.uk/resources/Rituals.shtml](http://www.greenspirit.org.uk/resources/Rituals.shtml)

(gently pour water into a bowl)

God has chosen the rolling tide  
 the flowing river  
 the rushing stream  
 the flooding burn  
 to hold all of heaven  
 and her promise

(pour water more fully into the bowl and let it overflow quite a bit)

in the pouring  
 and stirring  
 and spilling  
 and running  
 comes the act of heaven  
 and her promise

(scoop up water from the bowl and let it dribble through your fingers)

so come and be soaked in the spirit  
 as the story of salvation teems around us  
 parables whispered in the drenching  
 and baptism becomes the soothing rush of heaven  
 and her promise  
 of Jesus

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## Land and food

'We give unbounded thanks for the land which sustains us, in all its variety and complexity. We thank you for high mountains and deep valleys, for fertile plains and desert places, for tropical forests and meadow grasslands. Help us to value the soil of which we are part, and to be good caretakers of the land on which we all depend.'

**God said, 'Let the dry land appear. ... Let the earth put forth vegetation.'**

Genesis 1.9, 11



## Use your loaf

Christian Ecology Link's LOAF campaign encourages you to choose food which is:

- **L**ocally produced
- **O**rganically grown
- **A**nimal friendly
- **F**airly traded.

This is an especially suitable theme for a Eucharist service when bread and wine are shared or around Harvest. There is a wealth of material including service orders, sermon outlines, activity ideas and information at [www.christian-ecology.org.uk/loaf.htm](http://www.christian-ecology.org.uk/loaf.htm). The service can include the following Act of commitment:

### Act of commitment

Will you strive to live more simply,  
to value food that is locally produced,  
and to appreciate the regional varieties of the produce grown  
here in this place to which God has called you?

**With the help of God, we will.**

Will you oppose the unnecessary pollution of the soil  
and destruction of habitat for wildlife,  
will you commit yourselves to explore the merits of organic food,  
and will you endeavour, in whatever way you can,  
to respect and care for the environment?

**With the help of God, we will.**

Will you combat cruelty to farm animals  
and seek both to improve their conditions  
and to promote their well-being?

**With the help of God, we will.**

Will you seek to serve Christ in one another,  
rejecting the exploitation of the poor  
and working for fairer trade  
and a greater sharing of the blessings God has given us to enjoy?

**With the help of God, we will.**



## Scottish seasonal thanksgivings

These prayers of praise link the church year with food which is in season in Scotland at the time. You could adapt them to include your local menu.

### Prayers of praise

#### Advent (December)

Praise be for parsnips, cabbages and sprouts,  
goose and hill lamb, apples and pears,  
warm gifts to us in this wintry world  
which awaits in eager expectation  
for the new dawn of your coming  
to break upon us.

#### Epiphany (January)

Praise be for gifts from afar:  
for spices and chocolate, oranges and walnuts,  
rich luxuries to remind us of the grace  
of our kinship with all the corners of  
the earth  
in that most costly gift of your self in  
Christ.

#### Lent (February/ March)

Praise be for rabbit and salmon,  
beetroot and leeks, parsley and radishes,  
for fasting and simplicity  
and new and contrite hearts  
washed clean from greed and pollution  
in the blood of Jesus Christ.

#### Easter (April/ May)

Praise be for rhubarb and cockles,  
cauliflower, new potatoes, asparagus  
and spinach:  
enjoying your firstfruits, we offer  
ourselves  
as firstfruits of your renewal of all  
creation  
in Christ who conquered death once  
for all  
restoring our hope and kindling our joy.

#### Pentecost (June/ July)

Praise be for gooseberries, raspberries,  
cherries,  
courgettes, beans, peppers, lamb and crab,  
Holy Spirit creating, strengthening,  
inspiring,  
grace tasted and smelt and savoured,  
making the lifeblood warm in our veins  
and the breath inspired to speak in your  
tongue.

#### Trinity (August/ September)

Praise be for trout and tomatoes,  
courgettes and carrots,  
strawberries, aubergines and peas  
the variety of species and shapes and  
smells  
in this one web of life on earth,  
teaching us the mystery of your blessed  
Trinity.

#### Creation Time (October)

Praise be for grouse and venison,  
onions and mushrooms,  
plums and damsons,  
brambles and elderberries:  
Praise be that again you visit the earth  
and bless it,  
and crown the year with your goodness.

#### Kingdom Season (November)

Praise be for partridge and oysters,  
chestnuts, pumpkins and quinces.  
Through your bounty we feast as kings,  
so we worship you, O King most high.

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eleanormharris@stjohns-edinburgh.org.uk



## REFLECTION **Food**

A farmer went out to sow  
and sowed a field of maize,  
and as the farmer scattered the seed  
it bounced as it landed on the earth.

Some fell on the pathways where the soil was packed hard  
from the long walk of refugees,  
some whose land was now dry and infertile,  
others whose land was now owned by large industrialist for mono-cropping.

Some fell on rocky ground where there was little soil.  
Ancient forests had been removed for ranch farming  
and while the corn grew for a year or so, soon the soil was exhausted  
and the land became a desert, and no crops could grow.

Some fell among thorn bushes that choked the plants,  
because there no one was there to farm the land.  
Conflict or subsidy had left this land fallow  
letting those in other countries export their crops to the fallow lands  
while they had little enough for themselves.



But some seed fell in good soil,  
and the plants produced corn,  
some a hundred grains, others sixty, and others thirty  
and this was used to produce ethanol for cars  
and high quality feed for cattle and chickens.

And the world sowed the seed  
but was listening to the wrong kind of profit.

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## Life and biodiversity

'We thank you for the integrity and diversity of all living creatures. Enlarge within us a sense of fellowship with our brothers and sisters, the animals, with whom we share the earth and who love the sweetness of life. Grant us compassion in our dealings with all creatures great and small.'

**God said, 'Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth ... Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind.'** Genesis 1.20, 24

Biodiversity is the amazing richness and variety of wildlife and habitats on Earth, from snowfields to rainforests and from mountain tops to the deep ocean floor. Even in 21st-century Britain the range of biodiversity is extraordinary. In the busiest city park





If we break too many threads, the web of life collapses. God has no strands to reach us

and the quietest rocky cove there is an enormous number of individual species. Find out about it at the Natural History Museum website, [www.nhm.ac.uk/nature-online/biodiversity](http://www.nhm.ac.uk/nature-online/biodiversity)

Imagine a spider's web, damp with dew, a spider in the middle. Imagine you break a thread ... and another ... and another ... eventually the web suddenly collapses. Trees, polar bears, sparrows, corals ... all are strands in the web of life God created. If we break too many threads, the web of life collapses. God has no strands to reach us.

## Benedicite

The canticle **Benedicite omnia opera** (All ye works of the Lord, bless the Lord) comes from **The Song of the Three Holy Children** in the Apocrypha and is a song calling all of nature to praise God. It is available in liturgical books such as **Common Worship** and is used regularly during worship in the Scottish Episcopal Church. Several churches have written their own **Benedicite**: following are two to inspire your own ideas.

### Benedicite

All peoples of the Lord, bless the Lord, exalt him and praise his name for ever  
 All mighty trees, saplings and bushes; brambles and all spiky and prickly plants,  
 All raucous birds and singing birds; birds and bats that fly by night,  
 All farms, with their animals and tractors; and sharp and heavy implements,  
 Bless the Lord, exalt him and praise his name for ever.

All high and windy places; gentle slopes and sheltered valley,  
 All rocky places, quarries and stone walls; with lichens, spiders and creeping insects  
 All boggy places; ferns and mosses, frogs and snails,  
 River, streams and weirs; waterbirds, fish and bankside animals,  
 All grassy places; moths and harvestmen, mice and shrews and voles,  
 Bless the Lord, exalt him and praise his name for ever.

All houses and gardens; and allotments with flowers and fruit,  
 All churches and schools; nurseries and playgroups  
 All shops and businesses; clinics and surgeries, and people travelling to and fro,  
 All peoples of the Lord, bless the Lord, exalt him and praise his name for ever.

Sammie Hewlett, St Cuthbert's Benfieldside, County Durham



**Benedicite**

You sun and moon, you stars of the southern sky,  
you northern lights and midnight sun.

Sunrise and sunset, night and day.

All mountains and valleys, grassland and wood,  
glacier, avalanche, mist, and snow.

Pine trees and palms, mosses and ferns.

Dolphins and whale, sea lion and crab,  
coral, anemone, snail, and shrimp.

Rabbits and cattle, moths and dogs,  
bee and sparrow, seagull, and hawk.

You first peoples of our lands,  
all who inhabit the long white cloud.

All you saints and martyrs of Planet Earth:

All people everywhere:

Let us give God our thanks and our praise.

© Rev Freddie Denman, Cornwood and Sparkwell, South Dartmoor, Devon  
[www.greenspirit.org.uk/resources/Rituals.shtml](http://www.greenspirit.org.uk/resources/Rituals.shtml)



All peoples  
of the Lord,  
bless the  
Lord, exalt  
him and  
praise his  
name for ever



## Humans and the environment

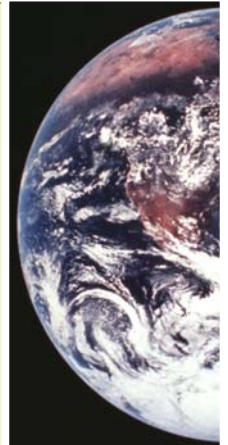
'We thank you for creating humankind according to your likeness. Help us, like you, to see the goodness of creation. Help us to remember that we are part of a greater whole, and that we have a duty to care for the earth, not just for ourselves. Help us to live in balance rather than conflict, to treat the material world with care and gentleness, and to conserve and nurture the things around us.'

**God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image.'** Genesis 1.26

### Affirmation

We join with the earth and with each other  
 To bring new life to the land  
 To restore the waters  
 To refresh the air.  
 We join with the earth and with each other  
 To celebrate the seas  
 To rejoice in the sunlight  
 To sing the song of the stars.  
 We join with the earth and with each other  
 To recreate the human community  
 To promote justice and peace  
 To remember our children.  
 We join with the earth and with each other  
 We join together as expressions  
 Of one loving mystery: for the healing  
 Of the earth and the renewal of all Life.

UN Environmental Sabbath Programme



### REFLECTION **Who are we?**

#### **We are the earth.**

(Be conscious of the Earth beneath our feet and the feel of your body where it contacts)

Earth is stardust-come-to-life, a magic cauldron  
 where the heart of the universe is being formed.  
 In me, the Earth and its creatures find their voices.  
 Through my eyes the stars look back on themselves in wonder.  
 I am the Earth.  
 This is my body.  
 Listen and remember.



### **We are the air**

(Be conscious of breathing)

**Voice** Air is the breath of the Earth, the movement of life, the quick violent stem  
the slow, caressing breeze. In my breathing,  
life is received and given back.  
My breath unites me to all things.

### **We are Fire**

(Be conscious of inner activity of thoughts and emotions)

**Voice** Fire is the energy of the universe, the source of power and new life.  
In my thoughts burn the fires of the original eruption of life;  
In my emotions, lightning flashes; in my love, new life is conceived.  
I participate in power. I share in energy of the universe,  
To keep warm, to fuel my body, to create my relationships.  
I am fire, this is my power. Listen and remember.

### **We are Water**

(Be conscious of saliva, sweat, tears)

**Voice** Water is the womb of the Earth from which all life is born.  
The oceans flow through the Earth, bringing abundance.  
The oceans flow through me carrying food, recycling waste  
Expressing emotions. I am water. This is my life,  
Listen and remember.

But we have forgotten who we are.

This earth is my sister; I love her daily grace, her silent daring,  
And how loved I am, how we admire this strength in each other,  
All that we have lost, all that we have suffered, all that we know;  
We are stunned by this beauty, and I do not forget;  
What she is to me, what I am to her.

© Rev Freddie Denman, vicar of Cornwood and Sparkwell, South Dartmoor, Devon  
[www.greenspirit.org.uk/resources/Rituals.shtml](http://www.greenspirit.org.uk/resources/Rituals.shtml)



## The need for restraint

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'We thank you for the gift of sabbath rest amid the busyness of our lives. May we have time to stand and stare, to reflect on the beauty of the created world, and to appreciate the many blessings of this life. Help us to be satisfied with enough, and to live within our means in relation to the earth.'

**God ... rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done.**

Genesis 2.2

### REFLECTION **Creator, Renewer, Sustainer**

---

**Three people read this: a Creator who is sculpting modelling clay; a Sustainer who is writing with a feather quill; a Renewer who is repairing some material with needle and thread.**

**Creator** I have sculpted mountain ranges,  
and I gasp in wonder at the beauty  
that this act of love always reveals.  
I am the Creator.

**Sustainer** In the past you were told,  
'an eye for an eye.'  
No longer, now 'love your enemy.'  
Only this is sustainable living  
I am the Sustainer.

**Renewer** Whoever believes creation is finished,  
completed and done for all time?  
Then it would only degrade and become corrupted.  
But I am the Renewer.

**Creator** I have cast the sand across the desert,  
and thrilled as the sun caught it  
and filled it with the light of supernovas.  
I am the Creator.

**Sustainer** Clothing the lily of the field,  
going the extra mile,  
blessing the peacemakers,  
this is how the life of the world is sustained  
and I am the Sustainer.

**Renewer** Creation is not a museum piece  
but like a field that live,  
as a body, it can renew itself.  
I am the Renewer.



**Creator** I have loved creation  
out from primordial chaos  
into the dance of cosmos.  
I have balanced it all  
and let it loose to live  
but when human greed pulls it in one direction  
the loss is great  
twisting it out of sync.  
I balanced the world  
but when conceit unbalances it  
snowcaps slide, deserts groan,  
forests struggle, life bends  
and I bear the pain.  
I am the Creator.

**Sustainer** Taking only what you need for today  
this is the sustainable way  
living in balance and in love with the world,  
this will allow life to continue.  
But hatred of enemy is not sustainable;  
storing up treasures is not sustainable;  
giving fish when bread is needed is not sustainable;  
this is not the way.  
I am the way.  
I am the Sustainer.

**Renewer** The world has a life force  
and I am that life force  
that brings buds to flower every year  
and persuades grass to grow  
ice-caps to shrink and grow again  
winds to change and seasons to arrive,  
but when the balance is out  
and humanity lives for the now  
rather than the always  
there is no hope,  
for hope lives into the future.  
When there is no future  
then renewal is harder.  
I am the Renewer.

**Creator** Listen to creation.  
Live in love with the creator.  
I am the Creator.



**Sustainer** Live with me.  
Live in balance with my brothers and sisters.  
I am the Sustainer.

**Renewer** The world longs to be renewed  
it is its genetic purpose  
give me the chance to renew it.  
I am the Renewer.

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### A thought for Lent

wildernesses are not what they used to be  
great expanses of ice-sheets are melting  
millions of acres of rainforests are being logged  
vast stretches of shoreline are now tourist destinations  
wildernesses are not what they used to be  
there are fewer and fewer places where we can go  
to live not for the instant but with the long now  
to move through painful past into renewed future  
to lament  
hold what has gone and live through what is becoming  
to hold the light and journey through  
to be in the place where faith finds a home  
and home is found on the open road  
it's harder and harder to find a place  
lent shaped  
with long purple shadows  
that gathers up what is passing  
and reaches into what is reforming  
that lets faith journey  
and souls grow  
this is the lost art of lament  
and an instantaneous world  
has little time  
(yet abundant cause)  
to spend on its passing  
wildernesses are not what they used to be

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# Starting with you ...

## Worship in the face of climate change

**Climate change describes the causes and effects of the whole range of environmental destruction which we can observe taking place: mass extinction, rainforest destruction, melting icecaps, desertification, acidifying oceans, floods and droughts, forest fires and hurricanes.**

- Climate change threatens unprecedented human suffering, gravely affecting every person on the planet within our lifetimes.
- Climate change is already estimated to kill 300,000 people every year, and will grow worse for many generations.
- Climate change is caused by us, by our reliance on fossil fuel for food, travel, clothing, technology, almost every aspect of our lives.
- Disastrous climate change does not have to happen. By making deep and immediate cuts (80% by 2050) in global carbon emissions, the worst effects can be avoided.

This will require huge change from everyone, politicians, businesses, individuals. To **repent** means to recognise that you are on the wrong path and to change direction ...

'Jonah started into the city. He proclaimed, "Forty more days and Nineveh will be overturned." The Ninevites believed God. They declared a fast, and all of them from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth. When the news reached the king of Nineveh he rose from his royal throne, took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the dust. Then he issued a proclamation in Nineveh: "By the decree of the king and his nobles. Do not let any man or beast, herd or flock, taste anything; do not let them eat or drink. But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth. Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence. Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish." When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened.'

Jonah 3:4-10.

Climate change is not an 'issue' or 'outreach opportunity'. It is the biggest spiritual and moral challenge that society has ever faced and asks questions which go to the heart of our worship.

Jesus warned against living our ordinary lives with no awareness of the times. It is like the people who were destroyed in the flood, 'eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day Noah entered the ark'. (Luke 17.27)



Jesus condemned complacent communities who didn't understand their need for repentance: 'Woe to you, Bethsaida! If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.' (Matthew 11.21-22)

The prophets called Israel to repent of greedy oppression of the poor. They said it made their religious worship hateful to God and warned that it would lead to environmental disaster: 'Hear this, you who oppress the poor and crush the needy. Bring your sacrifices every morning and brag about your free-will offerings, for this is what you love to do. I gave you empty stomachs in every city and lack of bread in every town, yet you have not returned to me, declares the Lord.' (from Amos 4:1-6)

Climate change requires action, and you can find out how your church can act by looking at Module 13. But effective action will only occur when there is repentance, a change of heart, and not just in us, but in the whole global community. For this reason climate change also requires prayer, the acknowledgement of our need for God's grace and mercy, and our dependence on God's love. Prayer is not an easy option: it is the beginning of a sea-change, a new path, a change of heart, a repentance.

**Do we dare address climate change in our worship?**

**Or will God ask us, how dare you come to me in worship?**

## **Intercessions**

A Rocha's Climate Prayer updates provide specific climate change prayer requests every day. Some are for people or places affected by environmental disasters. Others are for politicians and scientist searching for solutions. The short requests also include links to further information. They can be included in your intercessory prayers every week and made available for use in private prayer. They are available at <http://twitter.com/climateprayer>

## **Prayers from the eco-congregation community**

Following is an example of the prayers responding to climate change featured monthly on the Eco-Congregation website, contributed from around the network. Visit [www.ecocongregation.org.uk](http://www.ecocongregation.org.uk) to find more prayers and to contribute your own.



**Prayer**

Creator God – maker and shaper of all that is, seen and unseen;  
 You are in the expanse and depth of Creation, and in the processes that make life possible.  
 Yet we are distracted by the gods we make ourselves and our lives become fractured and fragmented.  
 In our brokenness we disturb the Earth's capacity to hold us.  
 Instead we find climate uncertainty and global injustice.

Call us back from the brink.  
 Help us to choose love not fear, to change ourselves and not the planet; to act justly for the sake of the vulnerable;  
 and to make a difference today for life tomorrow.  
 In your name – Father, Son and Spirit.  
 Amen.

© Martyn Goss 2008, Diocese of Exeter

**Climate-change psalms**

Ruth Jarman writes:

'I'm declaring war – anyone want to join me? The aim is to give vent to our anxiety (we are commanded to pray instead of worry) and fight the causes of climate change on a spiritual level – to use all the weapons in our armoury to fight what, on the face of it, is already a lost battle. We are fighting the most powerful structures in the world and the most basic human nature. Of the few in our world who understand quite how terrifying the future is, only some believe we have any hope to change the entrenched situation. We need God's help here.'

'Answer me when I call to you,  
 O my righteous God.  
 Give me relief from my distress;  
 be merciful to me and hear my prayer.'

How long, O men and women, will you turn the glory of the earth into dangerous pollution?

How long will we love the delusion of consumerism and seek the false gods of money and possessions?

Help us to remember that you have set apart the godly for yourself;  
 that you will hear us when we call to you.

In our exasperation and anxiety do not let us lose hope;  
 when we have quiet times in the day,  
 let us search our hearts and be silent.

Help us to live our lives sacrificially and to trust in the Lord.

Many are asking 'What is the point? The earth is finished. Who can save us now?'



'Let the light of your face shine upon us, O Lord.  
 You have filled my heart with greater joy  
 than when their grain and new wine abound.  
 I will lie down and sleep in peace,  
 for you alone, O Lord,  
 make me dwell in safety.'

© Ruth Jarman 2006

More of Ruth's Psalms and other material from the Christian Ecology Link Community of Prayer are available at [www.christian-ecology.org.uk/prayers-for-hope](http://www.christian-ecology.org.uk/prayers-for-hope)

## REFLECTION **Good cop, bad cop**

**This is based on Job 1:1, 2:1-10, in which God and Satan are in conversation. God is sitting in a chair and Satan wanders round him as if in charge.**

- God** Well, well, well ... the wanderer returns. Where on earth have you been? More worryingly, what have you been up to?
- Satan** Oh, you know ... strutting around the planet, here and there. Ducking and diving; bobbing and weaving. I must say, God, you truly have excelled yourself this time. What a wonderful creation. So many colours and textures and intricate details. I love what you've done with the fjords of Norway – and the mountain ranges, who would have thought you could have invented so many shades of purple. Wonderful!
- God** Well, I'm quite pleased with it myself. But I doubt you have come to pay a compliment. What have you really come here for?
- Satan** Oh God, you are too cynical. Though now you mention it, I do have an idea I'd like to propose. Truly you have made a wildly wonderful world. But how good is it really? Come on, God ... I see a flaw in the whole thing. You have created something on a massive scale. It knits together in the most ingenious ways, but I do believe there is a crucial glitch.
- God** Oh? And that would be ... ?
- Satan** Why, the human of course. It was all very worthy of you to create a being so imaginatively in your image. Personally I feel there is a little pride in that, which is really not worthy of you, a little arrogance even which will be this creation's downfall.
- God** Nonsense. Look at my man Job. What do you make of him now? Still spiritual, moral, good living. Still giving me total respect. Still steering clear of evil. He passed the acid test and his integrity's intact, even though, for no good reason, you were hell bent on destroying him.
- Satan** Yeah, but he's not exactly stereotypical, is he? I reckon that if you hit any human with something really nasty, something that hurts physically, they'll spend their last breath cursing you.



**God** Never.

**Satan** I beg to differ. Give me the human and I'll prove to you how arrogant you have been, for the humans will not only destroy themselves, they'll destroy your creation. Indeed, a person will give up beauty before they will give up power. I am sure it is so.

**God** Nonsense.

**Satan** And a person will give up on justice before they give up on the coffee they choose to drink.

**God** I don't believe it to be so.

**Satan** And a person will turn a blind eye to a changing climate before they chose a different lifestyle.

**God** Do you really think humans are that shallow? What about the good they do? They are wonderfully made. When you look in their eye you see a reflection of love. When you create each one's fingerprints or whisper their name calling them into the world, they are in the image of heaven. When you fill a flower with perfume or colour an autumn leaf with sunsets you know their souls soar with the breath of it.

**Satan** Yes, but when a person does not get what they want, they will curse you to your face. They will take the good, but not the bad. Simple fair-weather fans. Worse still, they'll deny their part in the web of creation. They will believe they stand against it, willing to fight it, as ruler, as sovereign.

**God** You think so? Well, have your way with them. Take the human and see if it is true. I created them with a love that is part of their every atom. They will see the truth, they will know the wonder, they will live in justice, they will share what I have given them, and they will step lightly in this world. They will not covet it, but care for it. It is how I created them. And they know their Creator.

**Satan** We'll see. We'll see.

**God** Yes, we shall ...

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# Music

**Please respect copyright: always acknowledge authorship of hymns and observe any instructions on websites to request permission or inform authors of performance.**

This list of hymns is designed to supplement rather than replace those listed in the previous Eco-Congregation Module 2. They reflect a very long and varied Christian tradition of hymn-writing. Some extol the beauty of nature or remind us of our duty to care for it. Others reflect more subtly on the relationship of God to nature, in the incarnation, in the sacrament of Holy Communion, in the activity of the Holy Spirit. The recent publication of the Church Hymnary (fourth edition) has made many very suitable new hymns and old psalms available.

## New hymns ...

Nine new environmental hymns to familiar tunes available at [www.christian-ecology.org.uk/hymns.htm](http://www.christian-ecology.org.uk/hymns.htm)

- Creator God, abundant life your mark (t. Sine Nomine)
- Creator God, your children's voices rise (t. Sine Nomine)
- For the beauty of the earth we give to God our praise (t. As the deer pants)
- Good gifts for all (t. We plough the fields)
- Lord of all languages, whose mighty Word (t. Slane)
- The earth is crying out for love (t. Waly Waly)
- The earth is the Lord's unite in awesome praise (t. Lord of the dance)
- The glory of creation, throughout the universe (t. Ewing)
- What the Lord creates (for children; t. Twinkle twinkle little star)

## ... and old hymns

'Jan Struther' (Joyce Maxtone Graham 1901 – 1953) wrote many beautiful hymns with a strong ecological theme, especially some of her less well-known ones. They are available at <http://tinyurl.com/janstruther>

- High o'er the lonely hills black turns to grey (Advent)
- Round the earth a message runs (Easter)
- Sing, all ye Christian people! (Easter)
- When Stephen full of power and grace (St Stephen, 26 December)
- When Mary brought her treasure (The Presentation, 2 February)



- Unto Mary, demon-haunted (St Mary Magdalene, 22 July)
- O saint of summer, what can we sing for you (St Bartholemew, 24 August)
- God, whose eternal mind (Marriage)
- Daisies are our silver (For children)
- When a knight won his spurs in the stories of old (For children)
- Lord of all hopefulness
- We thank you, Lord of heaven

## The Eco-congregation hymn board

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HAP Hymns and Psalms, Methodist Publishing House 1983

MP Mission Praise

CH3 Church Hymnary, third edition

CH4 Church Hymnary, fourth edition

All praise to you, O God of all creation

All you works of God CH4.151

Almighty Father of all things that be CH4.497

Behold the great Creator makes (Christmas) NEH.23, CH4.308

Brightest and best of the sons of the morning (Epiphany) NEH.49, CH4.327, HAP.123

By the rutted roads we follow CH3.619

Christ, of God unseen the image CH4.453

Christ is coming! Let creation from her groans and travail cease CH4.475

Come light, light of God (short chant) CH4.784

Come, risen Lord, and deign to be our guest NEH.279

Creator of the earth and sky (evening) NEH.152

Creator of the stars of night (Advent) NEH.1, CH4.288

Disposer supreme, and judge of the earth NEH.216

Earth, earth awake: your praises sing (Easter) CH4.420, HAP.379

Eternal Father strong to save NEH.354 CH4.260

Father Eternal, Ruler of creation (in environmental crisis) CH4.261

Father God in heaven, Lord most high [www.jubilate.co.uk](http://www.jubilate.co.uk)

Fill your hearts with joy and gladness (Psalm 147) CH4.103

For the fruits of all creation CH4.231, HAP.342

Glory be to Jesus (Passiontide/ atonement) NEH.83

Glory to God above! (Psalm 105) CH4.105

God in such love for us lent us this planet CH4.240

God is love: let heaven adore him (hope for creation) NEH.364, CH4.123, HAP.036

God is our refuge and our strength (Psalm 46) CH4.36



God moves in a mysterious way	NEH.365, CH4.158
God of day and God of darkness	CH4.217
God of great and God of small	CH4.174
God the Lord, the king almighty (Psalm 50)	CH4.39
God who created this garden of earth	www.ccli.co.uk
God who made the earth, declared it good in the beginning	CH4.228
God, whose farm is all creation	CH4.226
God's will for creation is Jesus' to do	CH4.136
Great God of every shining constellation	CH4.246
Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father	CH4.153, HAP.66
Have you heard the raindrops?	CH4.525
He's got the whole wide world	HAP.25
How excellent in all the earth (Psalm 8)	CH4.4
How lovely is thy dwelling-place (Psalm 84)	CH4.52
I bind unto myself today	NEH.159, CH4.639
I love the sun, it shines on me	CH4.144
I the Lord of sea and sky	CH4.251
In the bulb there is a flower (Hope)	CH4.727
Is this the way you made the world?	CH4.242
Isaiah the prophet has written of old (environmental justice)	CH4.241
It is finished! (Christ's perfect work)	NEH.380
Jesus is the name we worship	CH4.481
Let all creation dance in energies sublime	CH4.149
Let all the world in every corner sing	NEH.394, CH4.122, HAP.10
Let's sing unto the Lord	CH4.176
Light of the lonely pilgrim's heart (creation's longing)	NEH.399
Light of the minds that know him (Christ in creation)	NEH.400
Longing for light, we wait in darkness	CH4.543
Lord bring the day to pass (in environmental crisis)	CH4.238
Lord, in thy name thy servants plead (Rogation)	NEH.126
Lord of beauty, thine the splendour	NEH.265
Lord, your hands have formed this world	CH4.140
Love divine, all loves excelling (renewed creation)	NEH.408, CH4.519
My Jesus, my saviour, Lord there is none like you	CH4.531
My life flows on ("How can I keep from singing")	CH4.565
Nature with open volume stands (Passiontide)	NEH.87
Nourished by the rainfall, the earth can come alive	CH4.138
Now is the healing time decreed (Lent, fasting, penitence)	NEH.59
O God, our help in ages past (nature's transience)	NEH.417, CH4.161, HAP.358
O God, you search me and you know me	CH4.97



O laughing light, O first-born of creation	CH4.135
O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder	CH4.154
O Lord of heaven, and earth, and sea	NEH.422
O Lord of hosts, all heaven possessing	NEH.423
O Lord, our Lord, throughout the earth (Psalm 8)	CH4.5
O praise ye the Lord! Praise him in the height	NEH.427
O worship the King all glorious above	NEH.433, CH4.127, HAP.28
Of the Father's heart begotten (full version) (Christmas)	NEH.33
Oh, come, and let us to the Lord (Psalm 95)	CH4.59
Oh, sing a new song to the Lord (Psalm 98)	CH4.61
Oh the life of the world is a joy and a treasure	CH4.141
Pears and apples, wheat and grapes	CH4.232
Praise to the Lord for the joys of the earth	CH4.165
Praise the Lord, his glories show	CH4.152
Praise the Lord, ye heavens, adore him	NEH.437, CH4.139, HAP.15
River wash over me	MP.581
Spirit of love, you move within creation	CH4.618
Sing to him in whom creation (Pentecost/ Holy Spirit)	NEH.142
Sing to God with gladness, all creation	CH4.150
She sits like a bird (Pentecost/ Holy Spirit)	CH4.593
The earth belongs to God (Psalm 18)	CH4.18
The earth is yours O God (spring)	CH4.227
The Lord ascendeth up on high (Ascension/ kingship)	NEH.135, CH4.440
The Lord doth reign, and clothed is he (Psalm 93)	CH4.57
The Lord of heaven confess (Psalm 148)	CH4.104
The Lord reigns clothed in strength and power (Psalm 93)	NEH.266
The Lord whom earth and sea and sky (Blessed Virgin Mary)	NEH.181
The maker of the sun and moon (Christmas)	NEH.38
The peace of the earth be with you (short chant)	CH4.798
The spacious firmament on high	NEH.267, CH4.148, HAP.339
The spring has come	CH4.224
The stars declare his glory (Psalm 10)	CH4.10
This day the first of days was made (morning)	NEH.53
Thy mercy, Lord, is in the heavens (Psalm 36)	CH4.28
Tis winter now, the fallen snow	CH4.234
To thee, O Lord, our hearts we raise	NEH.261
Touch the earth lightly	CH4.243
Waterfall and Ocean, Canyon, cliff and shore	www.jubilate.co.uk
We plough the fields and scatter	HAP.352 CH4.229 NEH.262
Were the world to end tomorrow	www.ccli.co.uk



When all the world to life is waking (morning)	NEH.240
When your Father made the world (duty of stewardship)	CH4.239
Where are the voices for the earth?	CH4.244
Who put the colours in the rainbow?	CH4.143
You shall go out with joy and be led forth with peace	CH4.804

## Anthems

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**These anthems from 500 years of church music are ones which have been sung by the Choir of St John's, Edinburgh ([www.thechoir.co.uk](http://www.thechoir.co.uk)) during Creation Time liturgies and environmental services.**

- All things bright and beautiful (John Rutter 1945– )
- Benedicite (settings by Francis Jackson 1917– , Henry Purcell 1659–1695, Herbert Sumsion 1899–1995)
- Cantico delle Creature (Petr Eben 1929–2007)
- For the beauty of the earth (John Rutter 1945– )
- My beloved spake (Patrick Hadley 1899–1973)
- Lord, who hast made us for thine own (Gustav Holst 1874–1934)
- Rejoice in the Lamb (Benjamin Britten 1913–1976)
- Seek him that maketh the seven stars (Jonathan Dove 1959– )
- Sicut Cervus (GP da Palestrina 1525–1594)
- The Lamb (John Tavener 1944– )
- The heavens are telling (Joseph Haydn 1732–1809)
- The world is charged with the grandeur of God (Arthur Bliss 1891–1975)
- They that go down to the sea in ships (Herbert Sumsion 1899–1995)
- Thou visitest the earth (Maurice Greene 1696–1755)

