

## STEWARDS OF THE EARTH SUNDAY

to use for a Sunday Service to explore a biblical response to environmental justice



### AT A GLANCE

- This service can be used in part or whole
- Exploring the biblical founding for environmental justice
- You may want to encourage people to Walk to Church on this Sunday

### OPENING PRAYER

Lord God, we come before You with hearts full of gratitude for the beauty and majesty of Your creation.

The mountains, rivers, skies, and fields all declare Your glory.

Today, we gather in Your presence, acknowledging our responsibility to care for the earth You have entrusted to us.

Forgive us for the ways we have misused and neglected Your creation.

Renew in us a spirit of stewardship and justice, that we may protect and cherish the world as an act of worship to You.

May our time of worship today inspire us to walk humbly, love mercy, and act justly in caring for both the land and the lives of those most affected by environmental harm. We ask for Your wisdom, guidance, and strength as we seek to be faithful stewards of Your earth. In Jesus' name, Amen.

### INTRODUCTION

Environmental justice is a vital aspect of our Christian calling, reflecting our responsibility to care for God's creation and ensure equitable treatment for all people. The Baptist Union Environment Network (BUEN) emphasises the importance of recognising the goodness of creation, as stated in Genesis 1:25, and encourages churches to integrate environmental stewardship into their worship and daily practices.

An inspiring example comes from Norwich Central Baptist Church (NCBC), which received an eco-award from the Christian organization A Rocha. Their efforts went beyond simple recycling; they conducted an 'eco-audit' to improve various aspects of church life, including building management, travel, sourcing ethical suppliers, and food waste recycling. They also engaged in sermon series, climate change campaigns, and prayer meetings focused on environmental care. Kirstin Aitken, who led the team, noted, "As a church we've been learning how we can worship God more fully through caring for creation."

BUEN aims to build a network of environmental partners across Regional Associations to support churches in declaring the goodness of creation through worship, life, and action. This initiative seeks to raise awareness and respond to the environmental crisis by integrating care for the earth into all areas of church life.

As followers of Christ, we are called to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God (Micah 6:8). This includes advocating for environmental justice, ensuring that all communities have access to clean air, water, and land, and that the burdens of environmental degradation do not fall disproportionately on the marginalized. By embracing sustainable practices and advocating for policies that protect the environment, we honour God's creation and uphold our commitment to justice for all.

## INTERCESSIONS

Creator God,

We lift our voices in prayer for the earth and all who dwell upon it. We intercede for those suffering the effects of environmental injustice—the poor who bear the weight of pollution, the displaced who have lost their homes to climate disasters, and the vulnerable who struggle to access clean water and food. Lord, have mercy.

We pray for wisdom for world leaders, policymakers, and industries, that they may make decisions that honour Your creation and serve the common good. We ask for boldness in Your church, that we may rise to the challenge of caring for the environment, advocating for the marginalised, and living in ways that honour You. Lord, stir our hearts into action. May we be peacemakers between humanity and creation, working to restore what has been broken and redeem what has been misused. Give us courage, creativity, and compassion as we seek justice for the earth and all its people. In Jesus' name, Amen.

## SUGGESTED WORSHIP SONGS

- "Indescribable" (Chris Tomlin) – Describes the wonder of God's creation.
- "God of Wonders" (Third Day, Chris Tomlin, Paul Baloche) – Declares God's majesty in the universe.
- "So Will I (100 Billion X)" (Hillsong Worship) – A powerful song linking creation with worship.
- "Creation Sings (The Father's Song)" (Keith & Kristyn Getty) – A call for all creation to praise God.
- "The Earth Is Yours" (Gungor) – A song of gratitude for the earth.
- "Beautiful Things" (Gungor) – Speaks of God's ability to bring new life from dust.
- "Maker of the Moon" (Elle Limebear) – A song of wonder at God's handiwork.
- "Lord of All Creation (God of Wonders Beyond Our Galaxy)" – Celebrates God's presence in nature.
- "Holy Is the Lord" (Chris Tomlin) – Includes imagery of earth being full of God's glory.
- "The Whole Earth" (Gateway Worship) – Declares that the earth belongs to God.

## SERMON OUTLINE: A CALL TO STEWARDSHIP

Instead of using this sermon outline you can use Rev Dr Dave's video series on God Saw That It Was Good, which can be [downloaded here](#).

Introduction to the theme of environmental justice, emphasising how God calls us to care for creation and our neighbours.

Give a brief reference to current environmental crises—climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss—affecting the poor and marginalised the most.

Introduction to our guiding scripture: Micah 6:8 – "He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."

### 1. God's Creation and Our Responsibility

- Genesis 1:31 – "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good."
- The world is a gift from God, entrusted to us for care and preservation.
- Stewardship means not exploiting nature but protecting and sustaining it for future generations.
- The Baptist Union Environment Network (BUEN) encourages churches to integrate environmental stewardship into worship and daily life.

### 2. The Injustice of Environmental Degradation

- Environmental issues disproportionately affect the poor—those least responsible for climate change suffer the most from its consequences.
- Proverbs 31:8-9 – "Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves."
- Examples: Air pollution affecting low-income communities, deforestation displacing indigenous people, and climate disasters devastating developing nations.
- The church must respond to these injustices by advocating for sustainable policies and helping affected communities.

### 3. Biblical Examples of Justice and Creation Care

- Leviticus 25:23-24 – The land belongs to God; we are merely caretakers.
- Psalm 24:1 – "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it."
- Jesus' ministry: His concern for the poor extends to ensuring they have access to clean water, food, and a healthy environment.

### 4. Practical Ways the Church Can Lead

- Conduct eco-audits like Norwich Central Baptist Church did to make worship spaces more sustainable.
- Reduce waste and advocate for renewable energy.
- Engage in environmental justice campaigns—petition for cleaner energy, support sustainable businesses, and educate communities.
- Preach and teach about creation care as part of discipleship.

### 5. Our Call to Action

- Romans 8:19-21 – Creation longs for redemption, and we are part of that redemptive work.
- A commitment to environmental justice is an act of love and faith.
- Encourage personal and church-wide commitments to sustainable living and advocacy.
- Prayer for wisdom, courage, and transformation in our stewardship of God's creation.
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### Conclusion:

- Recap key points: Creation care is a biblical mandate; environmental degradation is a justice issue; we are called to action.
- Final challenge: How will we respond?

## SUGGESTED WORSHIP HYMNS

"All Things Bright and Beautiful" – Celebrates God's creation in nature.

"For the Beauty of the Earth" – A classic hymn of thanksgiving for creation.

"This Is My Father's World" – Emphasises God's presence in nature.

"How Great Thou Art" – Recognises God's power in creation.

"Morning Has Broken" – A joyful hymn about the beauty of a new day.

"Let All Things Now Living" – A song of praise for creation and God's guidance.

"Touch the Earth Lightly" – A hymn that calls for care and reverence for creation.

"O Lord My God (How Great Thou Art)" – Expresses awe at creation's beauty.

"Great Is Thy Faithfulness" – Mentions seasons and nature as signs of God's faithfulness.

## STORIES FROM LOCAL CHURCHES

You can find stories of how churches have engaged in environmental justice on the [Baptist Union Website here](#).

## BLESSING

May the Lord bless you and keep you.

May He open your eyes to the beauty of creation and your heart to its care.

May He fill you with wisdom to walk gently upon the earth and courage to seek justice for all who suffer from environmental harm.

May His love guide you in stewardship, His Spirit empower you for action, and His peace sustain you as you serve both creation and Creator.

Go now, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, to love and care for the world God has made. Amen.