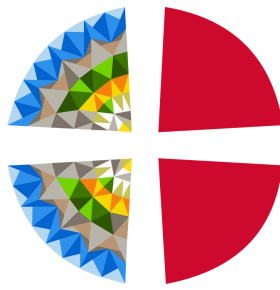


Yorkshire West  
Methodist District



RESPONDING TO THE  
CLIMATE CRISIS

# GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD: MY RESPONSE

*A free worship resource - please use, adapt and share!*



# GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD: MY RESPONSE

*Italics are not to be read out, these give guidance as to what to do during this part of the service.*

*Materials needed: some craft supplies for a creative response (see final page)*

## Call to worship

Today we are going to be thinking about creation from a climate change point of view, we begin with some verses from Psalm 104 as our call to worship.

How many are your works, Lord!  
In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.  
There is the sea, vast and spacious, teeming with creatures beyond number - living things both large and small.  
There the ships go to and fro, and Leviathan, which you formed to frolic there.  
All creatures look to you to give them their food at the proper time.  
When you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are satisfied with good things.  
When you hide your face, they are terrified; when you take away their breath, they die and return to the dust.  
When you send your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the ground.  
May the glory of the Lord endure for ever; may the Lord rejoice in his works - he who looks at the earth, and it trembles, who touches the mountains, and they smoke.  
I will sing to the Lord all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live.  
May my meditation be pleasing to him, as I rejoice in the Lord.'

*Psalm 104:24-34 NIV*

## Opening prayers

### A prayer of praise

Let us pray:

God of majesty and wonder, creator of atoms and energy, who sculpted the forms of our planet, we thank and praise you in our awe. God of constancy and change, of warmth and cold, of wet and dry, we are sometimes confused and saddened by the changing of the weather, but we thank and praise you as we sit with you in our confusion.

## Opening hymn choices

**StF 41 - Blessed be your name**

**StF 108 - In the beginning God played with the planets**

**StF 100 - All things bright and beautiful**

## Other hymn choices

**StF 99 - All creatures of our God and King**  
*(this is long, you may wish to omit some verses)*

**StF 107 - I sing the almighty power of God**

**StF 103 - God is Love: let heaven adore him**

**StF 68 - Worship God with the morning sunrise**

**StF 272 - From heaven you came**

**StF 249 - Jesu, Jesu, fill us with your love**

**StF 139 - Today I awake**

**StF 662 - Have you heard God's voice**

**StF 663 - I, the Lord of sea and sky**

**StF 727 - God in his love for us lent us this planet**

**StF 470 - Lord for the years**

## Opening prayers (contd)

God of splendour and light, you paint the colours in a myriad of hues, we thank and praise you in our enjoyment of beauty.

God of beauty who brings life and growth, seedtime and harvest, you have planted thousands of different plants both on land and in the sea. There are species of plant which we will never know about, but we are amazed by the variety of which we are aware from those which give us flowers and fruit and vegetables to fungi and plants which catch insects. We are grateful for the shade which trees give to us and the plants with fibres which we can use to make clothes and other things. We thank and praise you in our celebration of variety.

God of movement and imagination, you breathe life and have brought into being more different species of animal than we can fully comprehend God of insects and reptiles, of amphibians and mammals, of crustaceans and fish, of birds and of us, we thank and praise you in our love of nature. The richness of your creation is beyond telling, help us not to take it for granted but to pause and wonder at all that you have made.

We know that many of your creatures are in danger of extinction and many more species have already been lost to the world. We are sorry for the times when we have been careless and caused damage to any part of your world.

God of healing and resurrection, through Jesus you offer hope and new life. May we each know that we are forgiven.

By your Spirit and through your word teach

us how to care for the creatures with which we share this planet.

In the name of Christ our Lord and brother, Amen.

### A prayer of confession

Generous God, origin of life and of all that exists, we bow our heads before you. God wise beyond measure, you formed the world and made possible the cycles of life. You created the world and its systems to work in balance.

We are sorry that humanity, given the role of caring for creation, has fallen short of our calling. In the enthusiasm for ever advancing technology, humankind has not given enough thought to protecting the world you have made.

We recognise that you are the sovereign of creation.

You are our God and our saviour.

We ask forgiveness on behalf of humanity.

We ask forgiveness on our own behalf. We are sorry for when we have been complacent about climate change.

We pray that through Jesus and by the Holy Spirit at work in our lives, we may know the truth of your forgiveness at work in our lives. Help us to become more willing to change.

We thank you that you love this world and ask you to give us a deep love for all that is around us. Inspire us into loving action for the benefit of the whole planet.

We offer these prayers in the name of Jesus the healer and bringer of peace, Amen.



## The Lord's Prayer

*In a version or translation with which you are familiar.*

### Introducing the theme

Today we are focusing on the Bible verse from John 3:16 'For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him might not perish but have eternal life.'

The creation accounts suggest a particular role for humankind in the world which God has made. This has been understood as humanity having some form of authority over a creation which has been made specifically to resource our lives. Nowadays we see that as an inaccurate understanding of how God has called us to live because it does not speak enough of care nor help us to recognise the wonder of creation.

The word stewardship has also been used but this is argued against because it turns the rest of creation into an object to be managed rather than giving us the idea of fellow creatures with whom to live in relationship.

God so loved the world and that means the whole of creation. We are called to respect and love rather than to manage our creaturely neighbours.

In Genesis, soon after the creation accounts, we come to the story of Noah and the great flood. We hear the end of that story now.

## Reading

**Genesis 9:1-17**

## Reflection on the reading

This Bible passage speaks more clearly than the creation stories do about the idea of humankind having dominance over the rest of creation. I wonder how this make us feel. It is interesting that in Genesis chapter 1 God gives Adam and Eve a vegetarian diet but in Genesis chapter 9 God adds meat to the diet, although still with restrictions.

Encourage the congregation to share how they feel about the idea that people eating less meat is one way of combatting the climate crisis. This could be done by a show of hands, people raising their hands to a lesser or greater degree depending on how enthusiastic they feel. Or, if the congregation is willing and able to move about you could ask them to position themselves across the room with one side representing fully vegan and the other representing a substantial meat diet.

*[We do not have the time in this service to fully explore how the climate change debate could affect what we eat. If you would like to explore this more there is a chapter on food in the book 'Changing the climate' by Debbie, David and Jamie Hawker.]*

Meat eating aside, it is very clear in the words which we are told that God spoke to Noah and his family that the covenant relationship God was making included not just humans but all living creatures. This is a sign early in the Bible account of how God cares for the whole of creation.

As the Methodist Covenant service reminds us each year, the covenant is the special relationship which God makes with his people. It begins with that promise which God

### Reflection (contd)

made to Noah and his sons and all of creation which was the first covenant. A bit later God made another covenant, this time with Abraham, and then quite a bit later he made another covenant with the people of Israel through Moses. Years later, through the prophet Jeremiah God began to speak of a new, different kind of covenant relationship which he promised would be coming. This would be a more personal covenant with each person knowing God for themselves. This all happened because God kept on loving the world even when people turned away from him. The new covenant was made possible because of Jesus.

So what did Jesus do?

*[Gather answers from the congregation covering everything Jesus did from being born into the world, teaching, healing, calling disciples, being crucified, being raised...]*

And in all these things which Jesus did, who do we think he did them for?

*[the answer could be God or humanity or both].*

As we consider all that Jesus did from: being born; to living a life of service; to giving himself on a cross; to returning after the resurrection to prepare his followers for the Church, we are reminded that Jesus himself said that he came not to be served but to serve. This is beautifully described in our next reading:

### Reading

**Philippians 2:5-13**

### Reflection on the reading

John chapter three, verse sixteen reminds us that 'God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.'

This promise includes us. That does not mean that we will never have to deal with anything difficult in our lives. But through the cross anything which might separate us from God has been dealt with. We can join in the covenant relationship which God offers. We have eternal life. We can trust in and depend upon God as our ever-present help and strength through all things. Thanks be to God.

But relationships change us, don't they? As we follow the one who came to serve, we are also called to serve. This is how we live out our faith. Can anyone remember what Jesus said the two greatest commandments are?

*[Answers: to love God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and love your neighbour as yourself.]*

'God so loved the world' this means all of creation and as followers of Christ we can become part of the way in which God's love can be shown to the world.

Putting our faith in God through Jesus changes our whole lives. It affects everything we do and informs every choice we make. As we remember that God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son, we may be led to ask ourselves: so what should I be giving or doing to show my love to God in return?

### Reflection (contd)

*[You might choose to open this up for discussion].*

Part of the answer definitely comes in the second of the great commandments, we show our love for God by taking seriously the call to love our neighbour. The challenge is to work out who our neighbour is.

Of course, none of us are nosey neighbours watching and commenting on everything which is going on around us. But we will notice when something is not quite right across the road or down the street. Many neighbours have arrangements where they check that each other's curtains are open of a morning as a sign as to whether they are both OK that day. During the pandemic we may have depended on our neighbours for help with shopping or just to give us someone to call 'hello' to over the fence.

If we take the time to check that our immediate neighbours are doing alright and respond when we see there is a need, can we also take the time to check how our global neighbours are doing?

The news will tell us when southern Europe or parts of the United States or Australia are suffering severe heat waves and forest fires. We hear about some of the devastating flooding and about areas of drought. But there is much news that we end up missing unless we look for it. Maybe we could learn to be nosier about our global neighbours and find out what is going on in their lives and what the challenges are which they face, one of which will most likely be the effects of climate change.

As we discover more, we will hear both good news and bad news. We may read about the development of more drought resistant crops in some parts of the world, we could discover initiatives such as the one to build sustainable flood resistant traditional style houses in parts of Pakistan which have been devastated by floods, or the work All We Can is doing in Malawi to enable communities to 'build back better' after cyclones have destroyed homes and livelihoods *[Find out more at [allwecan.org.uk](http://allwecan.org.uk) and/or look up some recent examples to talk about.]*

We will also find out more about how people are struggling. This will inform our prayers but also help us to find ways to respond.

God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him might not perish but have eternal life. This is a message of hope for each of us.

Perhaps we could also say: God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son to show people how to live unselfishly. We are called to love God and to love our neighbour. God so loves the world that he calls us to be good neighbours both locally and globally.



## Dedicating the offering

Grateful for all that you have given us, we bring our gifts, loving God.

Grateful for all your blessings, we bring ourselves, loving God.

Guide us, we ask, as we seek to use these gifts to your glory

so that others may know your love and your blessing in their lives.

In the name of Christ we pray, Amen.

## Prayers of intercession

*[Ask people who they would like to pray for... encourage thoughts for global neighbours as well as local.]*

To the words 'Please help us to know how to' will you respond '**love our neighbours**'.

We pray for those we know....*(include names where you have permission to do so)*

Leader: Please help us to know how to

Response: **love our neighbours**.

We pray for those in our local community....*(think about any difficult situations locally and include names where you have permission).*

Help us as your church in this place to know how to be a sign of your presence and a beacon of hope in this community.

Leader: Please help us to know how to

Response: **love our neighbours**.

We pray for our neighbours around the world...*(include issues from the news and climate related issues as well as any the congregation have suggested).*

Leader: Please help us to know how to

Response: **love our neighbours**.

We praise you God that you love this world that you have created.

We thank you that you love us.

Leader: Please help us to know how to

Response: **love our neighbours**.

## Blessing

*Encourage the congregation to share a blessing, the following Gaelic blessing may work well.*

May the road rise up to meet you.

May the wind be always at your back.

May the sun shine warm upon your face;  
the rains fall soft upon your fields and until we meet again,

may God hold you in the palm of his hand.

Amen.

## Craftivism

*Invite the congregation to partake in some craftivism at the beginning of the service while they are listening. Possibly sit them around tables with a range of craft supplies in the middle with the below brief.*

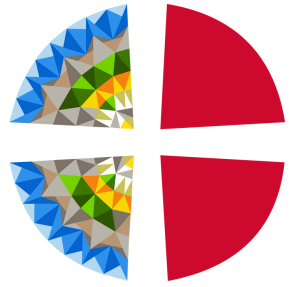
- **Think of something you and God love in the world. It could be a plant, an animal, a favourite food or drink. Something that brings you joy, something you fear may be lost as we look to the future.**
- **Draw, sew, knit, collage a representation of this thing.**
- **Create a display of these items at the back of church with the title 'God so loved the world and so do we. These are things we love and work to care for in the face of climate crisis.'**
- **Then send them as a package to you local MP with a handwritten letter.**



# Find out more and take action today:

[ywmethodist.org.uk](http://ywmethodist.org.uk)  
[allwecan.org.uk](http://allwecan.org.uk)  
[ecochurch.arocha.org.uk](http://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk)

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