

## Trinity Sunday, 1 after Pentecost – Year A

### Trinity Sunday, 1 after Pentecost – 4 June 2023

The Faith Action Programme would like to thank the Church of Scotland Net Zero Strategy Group for their thoughts on Trinity Sunday, first after Pentecost.

Weekly Worship, based on the Revised Common Lectionary, is for everyone – in any capacity – who is involved in creating and leading worship.

It provides liturgical material that can be used for worship in all settings. Our writers are asked to share their approaches to creating and delivering this material to equip leaders with a greater confidence and ability to reflect on their own worship practice and experience and encourage them to consider how this material might be adapted for their own context.

We would encourage continual reflection on the changing patterns of worship and spiritual practice that are emerging from disruption and how this might help identify pathways towards development and worship renewal.

An archive of resources for daily worship can be found on the [Sanctuary First website](#).

We may not all be gathered in the same building, but at this time, when we need each other so much, we are invited to worship together, from where we are – knowing that God can hear us all and can blend even distant voices into one song of worship.

<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Genesis 1:1-2:4a.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Psalm 8 .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Matthew 28:16-20 .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2 Corinthians 13:11-13 .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Sermon ideas .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Prayers .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Musical suggestions .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Reflecting on our worship practice .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Useful links .....</b>	<b>14</b>

## Introduction

When God created the world, God gave it rhythm and a beat.

God called this good, and this rhythm has played since the beginning.

The breath you just took as you read Weekly Worship signifies your involvement in the rhythm of life, this act of grace we are all a part of. As life-giving as our breath is, we can often forget that we are taking a breath, leading us to take all that it offers us for granted.

Our own life mimics the rhythm of the seasons. For some, our life feels like summer; for others, autumn; for others, it feels like the depths of winter; for others, new life is breaking forth in spring. We are tied to this rhythm of nature in deep and profound ways.

As with our breath and the seasons, we have often forgotten the rhythm and beat of nature. Instead of marvelling at the rhythm of life, we have sought to exploit it for an idea, a purpose, or to control it for our benefit. We can forget the fragility and take for granted all it offers.

As you prepare for Sunday, we encourage you to connect yourself once more to the rhythms and beat of the creation. To do this, perhaps read the scriptures outside or, at the very least, have a window open. What do you hear, what do you feel, what do you smell? What is creation's rhythm teaching you about God? Scripture shows us that God is to be found in God's creation. Whether we look to the mountains or the depths of the ocean, God is there. Perhaps take off your shoes and read scripture as the grass gets between your toes. Listen to the birds, to the stones crying out, and connect yourself to the rhythm and beat again.

*Rev Justin Taylor, Net Zero Chair & Minister of St Andrew's in the Grange, Guernsey*

## [Genesis 1:1-2:4a](#)

### **Net Zero – God's original sustainability agenda for humans**

As a friend and I sat at dinner in a restaurant on a Saturday evening in January, our discussions went from politics to family to religion and then to healthy eating. I said to my friend that there is nothing wrong with being a vegetarian; after all, God created man and animals as vegetarians in the first place.

My friend, also a Christian, wasn't sure about this statement and directed me to Genesis 9:2-3, where God said, "*And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be on every beast of*

*the earth.... They are given into your hand. Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs” (NKJ), citing this as evidence that God made us eat anything, including meat.*

In response, I directed him to Genesis 1:29-30, where God said, “*See I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree ... to you it shall be for food. And so to every beast of the earth ... I have given every herb for food,*” and it was so. God’s agenda for humanity was set out in Genesis 1, but by Genesis 9, this had changed. My friend asked me, what changed this? I answered, that between Genesis 1 and 9, sin, through the fall, crept in and changed everything. Human appetite changed forever, not just for food but for possessions. In the beginning, the herb that humans ate was fortified with sufficient nutrients to grow and thrive without needing to eat meat. This was the Net Zero God meant for humankind. The modern drive towards Net Zero is a welcome one which God loves. However, for things to return to God’s original plan, humankind has to return to God for God’s agenda to thrive.

*Anthony Olowoyeye, Head of Estates, Procurement and Health & Safety for CrossReach*

## [Psalm 8](#)

Psalm 8 echoes similar metaphors in Genesis 1. We see it is God who speaks, who is creating and who sets the boundaries; God who makes humanity, and asks them to rule over creation. If you were to summarise Genesis 1, Psalm 8 would be a good start.

There is so much to unpick here regarding our care for creation. But it is important to talk about healthy boundaries. Verse 2 uses the Hebrew term  $\text{מְצֻדָּה}$  which is often translated as a stronghold. The root can mean to lay a foundation and a place to lay your head, i.e., a pillow. God separated the waters, laid the foundation of the land (a physical boundary), and made a place for the natural world to rest. Those who step outside of the boundaries (or abuse the boundaries) are out of step with the will of God and will be silenced.

There is an oxymoron in the statement that it is the praise of children and infants that God will use to silence those outside the boundaries. A child’s vocabulary and speech are often underdeveloped; infants can only make noises with their mouths. However, these are the ones whom God will use to silence those in power. If you were to employ someone to silence people, you would want someone who was an excellent orator; a child/infant would not fit the bill.

Children are the most vulnerable in relationships with those who overstep boundaries. The analogy reminds us to listen to those God uses to speak to us, even if they are the people

we least expect. These people, often the most vulnerable in our world, say they feel the hurt and pain of overstepping the boundary and calling us to walk closer to the limits God has set.

In 2018, a man from Mozambique spoke at the General Assembly, asking us to see his pain as floods had ravaged his homeland. Thousands had died, infrastructure destroyed, and crops decimated. This man pleaded for us to live within the boundary God had set regarding investment. Unfortunately, we did not listen to his cry.

Psalm 8 is both praises for the glory of creation and a call to see who is speaking to us about the pain we are causing in the world.

*Rev Justin Taylor, Net Zero Chair & Minister of St Andrew's in the Grange, Guernsey*

## **Matthew 28:16-20**

Tomorrow, 5 June 2023, is the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of [World Environment Day](#). When shaping these notes, I began by exploring World Environment Day resources on ending plastic pollution, including its relationship to climate injustice and Net Zero. Another starting point was acknowledging Trinity Sunday. With those contexts in mind, I read the passage a few times, open to what I would notice, before turning to various commentaries, which affirmed and added insights.

These verses conclude Matthew's gospel, with threads from throughout the gospel and reaching out and forward. Matthew continues the Hebrew Bible's symbolism of mountains as places of revelation, including the Sermon on the Mount and the Transfiguration. Galilee offers continuity with Jesus' ministry and call, with a reminder that God's ways are not aligned with conventional power and are for all the Earth – away from centres of power (2:22, 4:12), on the way to other people and places (4:15).

It is a very human group of disciples that met Jesus – though if it is only eleven, then it is not an inclusive list of Jesus' closest followers; just a few verses on from the women commissioned to share news of Jesus' resurrection. Matthew's eleven is a reminder of the betrayal of Judas Iscariot – a very recent loss/failure. The text says they came as directed and worshipped the risen Jesus – while some doubted. Being there, trying to find and follow Jesus, and being uncertain are not mutually exclusive. It is to that incomplete, confused, messed-up group of humans that Jesus gives an astonishing responsibility.

The task is outward-looking action. Go, make disciples, baptising, teaching – all verbs, requiring action. The task is given with all authority on heaven and on earth, so this Earth

matters, and all nations and people matter. Earth and all people need transformation and the hope of new life, (which right now must include tackling the climate crisis and plastic pollution). It is a task given to them as a community, no matter how incomplete and uncertain, inviting others into the community of believers. Others are to be invited to come and learn about God's ways, as Jesus' ways are taught, shared and learned together, with doubts and failings, as well as worship and obedience. Baptism is a sign of coming into that community of learners.

The responsibility is vast – to all nations, on behalf of the mystery of the triune God, teaching obedience to everything that Jesus commanded – yet it is given to this small, flawed group. Crucial is the promise that concludes the passage and the gospel. Jesus, who was identified in His infancy as Immanuel, “God is with us” (1:23), promises to continue to be with them. That promise is “always, to the end of the age,” stretching beyond that particular group of believers and doubters, encompassing this time of life on Earth. The authority and responsibility are given with the promise of the presence of the living God, which gives hope that the living and loving asked of them and us is possible.

*Rev Jenny Adams, Duffus, Spynie & Hopeman*

## **2 Corinthians 13:11-13**

I came to this text having explored World Environment Day resources, aware of Net Zero concerns and Trinity Sunday, and after considering the gospel text. Reading this text, including the alternative translations noted in the NRSV, generated notes and questions, which were then explored with commentaries.

This is the conclusion of Paul's letter, summing up his overall message, signing off and offering hope. Aspects of this sign-off are not unlike “love and hugs” or “Mary says hi” we might use, while the last verse will be familiar as “the Grace.”

The whole letter is written to a divided community of believers, where differences have escalated (1 Corinthians 1:11-12), and ‘super-apostles’ are challenging Paul's teaching. The letter is full of reminders of human weakness, including afflictions and despair, changed plans, and the conflict that causes anguish for Paul – yet God uses these “clay jars” (4:7) for the treasure of good news.

In that context – familiar in a divided world and struggling church – some of Paul's conclusions could feel trite if treated too simplistically. Obeying verse 11a's alternative instruction to “Rejoice” needs an envisaging of a transformed situation. “Put things in order,” “agree with one another,” and “live in peace” are all more easily said than done

amongst conflict, injustice and profound disagreement about life and faith. Those instructions are given a practical outworking: "Greet one another with a holy kiss." Maybe that can help build peace – engaging with each other face to face as real people needing love may get beyond ideological or theological arguments.

Paul grounds the letter and these instructions in the community's knowledge of him and how God has been working through him and others. The connection to the wider community of believers – not just Paul, who never worked alone – is reflected in the greeting from "all the saints."

The deeper grounding is in the community of God. It is in the presence of the God of love and peace that it may be possible to get it together, agree and live in peace. Here, to a conflicted and divided community, Paul shares the grace and presence of God in the community (rather than the simpler "grace of the Lord Jesus Christ" of other letters).

God is in an eternal relationship of mutual self-giving love – which we glimpse as the Trinity. God is also in an ongoing dynamic relationship with creation – the Earth and all people – with that same self-giving love. That love is what can make it possible for the community of believers in Corinth to kiss, live in peace and rejoice. That love comes as grace – unconditional giving of what we don't deserve – shown to us in Jesus' life, death and resurrection. It also comes as communion - sharing in (NRSV's alternative) – of the Holy Spirit, the living God with us, within us, between us and around us.

*Rev Jenny Adams, Duffus, Spynie & Hopeman*

## Sermon ideas

### **The scale of challenge and hope**

World Environment Day hopes to end plastic pollution, sharing mindboggling statistics about how much plastic we consume and how much is in our oceans. Our Net Zero strategy requires enormous change at every level of the Church of Scotland's activities when many are already struggling with changes and the loss that comes with those. Add to those whatever is in the news and all that is going on in our lives and communities, and the scale of the challenges and injustices we are called to face is vast.

In this wounded world, we can feel wholly inadequate. We are flawed human beings, who mess up, who disagree strongly, who are afraid and confused, and who are part of often-shrinking congregations. Yet that is who God has always invited to come into the community of God's love, and to go and act so that all the Earth will know God's love. That

love will be made tangible in peace, justice and giving space for creation to heal. We see it in those Jesus gathered and sent, and in Paul and the community of believers in Corinth.

The challenge and responsibility are huge – but hope does not come from being a large or united church, it comes from God being with us – God in relationship with Godself, with creation and with us. That promise is made with all authority in heaven and on earth, to the end of the age – so is a promise for here and now, on Earth in this time. It is an invitation into the all-embracing love of God, into the community with God and with so many other flawed humans, learning and taking loving action. The scale of the hope and promise are huge, not because of anything about us, but because of God, known to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

*Rev Jenny Adams, Duffus, Spynie & Hopeman*

## Prayers

### **Call to worship** *(based on Psalm 8 v1 & 3, NRSV Catholic Edition)*

Gracious God,

How majestic is Your name in all the Earth!

We come together to worship and give thanks for the heavens,  
the work of Your fingers,  
the moon and the stars that You have established.

As we reflect today on Your life-giving creation  
and give thanks for it,  
may we consider our impact upon it,  
and vow to take better care of it.

Amen

### **Confession / Repentance**

Loving Lord,

We come to You, the one who is God of all creation.

The one who brought forth life and light from emptiness and darkness,

Who formed the restless oceans, the soaring skies, the beautiful and productive land,

Who populated them with the beauty of the creation we see around us and marvel at each day.

The God who completed creation and who saw that it was good.

Loving Lord,

we come to You, the one who created us in Your image,



Who gave us responsibility to steward Your good creation,  
Who entrusted Your handiwork to us to care for and to nurture.

But

we confess before You that too often we have failed that trust.

Too often, we have failed to guard the goodness and integrity  
of the creation which You have entrusted to our care.

Too often spoiled what You have given us,  
preferring instead to pollute, to profit from, to exploit.

Too often, failed to give thought  
to those with whom we share this beautiful planet –  
far less to give glory to the God who made it  
and who despairs at the groans of all creation.

Holy Lord,

accept from us, we pray

our confession of guilt,

our plea for mercy,

and our turning to You in repentance.

Accept from us

the sincerity and humility with which we bow before You.

Inspire Your people, we pray,

to work tirelessly to care for the world around us.

To be forever mindful of all our fellow inhabitants of this earth,  
and to do so to Your eternal glory and honour.

For we ask these things in the name of Your Son, Jesus Christ

Amen

### **Thanksgiving / Gratitude** *(Inspired by Lyrics from “Indescribable” by Chris Tomlin)*

Loving Creator God,

We give thanks for all Your work;

The heavens, the oceans,

the dusty deserts, the luscious jungles.

You have entrusted us to care for, to nurture,

And to support all the wonders of the world.

We ask for Your guidance as we seek to do better;

to be Your healing hands and show Your love for us and the world  
in our actions to protect the environment.

Throughout history, we have been too quick to tear down  
or attempt to re-model Your creation,  
Rather than consider how You placed  
each and every thing on this earth for a reason.  
Every creature is unique; it has a purpose and a place.

Amazing God,  
You placed every single twinkling star in the sky,  
and You know them each by name.  
You are all-powerful, untameable and mighty,  
You are love, gentleness and compassion.

Awestruck, we fall to our knees as we humbly proclaim,  
You are amazing, God.

Empower us to make ethical choices in community with one another  
as we use our actions to worship the earth's beauty,  
Because if we try to do this alone, we will fall short.  
May our actions be mindful of the different privileges,  
abilities and resources that we have,  
Always striving to lift up those most affected by the climate crisis  
but who have contributed the least to it.  
As we seek to deliver Your Kingdom on Earth, as it is in heaven,  
May we turn our attention to You, Lord,  
And never cease to give thanks for Your works.  
Amen

### **Prayer for others / Intercession**

Mighty God,  
We come to You today with our thoughts and prayers  
for those at the sharp end of the climate crisis.  
This emergency is not felt equally in Your world,  
nor is everyone on this earth equally responsible.  
We cannot consider how to tackle climate change  
without tackling issues like poverty, racism and sexism in tandem,  
And so, we ask for Your wisdom  
as we conceive how to faithfully root out these injustices.  
We pray for those affected by natural disasters,  
which scientists say will only occur more frequently

unless we take climate action.

More and more people all over the world are being displaced  
due to climate-related accidents,  
And we pray that we will be more open to helping them  
and taking action to prevent it from reoccurring.

Caring God,  
Help us to work together to deliver climate action,  
But also inspire us to consider how we can all take small actions in our own lives  
to change things for the better.  
Guide us, as we reflect on how we spend our money,  
what clothes we wear,  
what we eat,  
what modes of transport we use,  
and what we consume  
so that we can make decisions that are less harmful for the planet.  
We pray that Your love would burn brightly in us and through us  
into the world through the actions we take,  
to better care for Your mystifying, abundant and beautiful creation;  
From the smallest insect to the tallest canopies,  
to the deepest depths of the seas;  
From the most remote places on the planet to the hustling, bustling cities,  
May we support one another  
to share Your love with the world in all that we do.  
Amen

### **Closing prayer**

Wonderful, life-giving God,  
As we go out from here,  
may we tread more gently on Your Earth;  
May we take time to breathe in Your incredible creation.  
May we worship You with our hands,  
our hearts and our minds,  
To deliver peace, inspire joy,  
and spread love.  
Amen

*Prayers written by Seonaid Knox, Elder at St John's Church: Gourock*

## Musical suggestions

Our [online music resource](#) is on the Church of Scotland website; you can listen to samples of every song in the Church Hymnary 4th edition (CH4) and download a selection of recordings for use in worship. You will also find playlists for this week and liturgical seasons and themes on the *Weekly Worship* and *Inspire Me* tabs.

- You can find further musical suggestions for this week in a range of styles on the [Songs for Sunday blog](#) from Trinity College Glasgow.
- CH4 113 –“God the father of Creation”
- CH4 124 –“Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of Creation”
- CH4 137 –“All things bright and beautiful”
- CH4 149 –“Let all creation dance”
- CH4 238 –“Lord, bring the day to pass”
- CH4 239 –“When your Father made the world, before the world was old”
- CH4 240 –“God in such love for us lent us this planet”
- CH4 242 –“Is this the way you made the world”
- CH4 243 –“Touch the world lightly”
- CH4 500 –“Lord of creation, to you be all praise!”

From *Songs of God's People*

- SGP 4 –“All Over the World”
- SGP 36 –“God who is everywhere present on earth”
- SGP 45 –“How Lovely on the Mountains”
- SGP 73 –“Lord of life”
- SGP 97 –“Sons and Daughters of Creation”

From *Known Unknowns* (J Bell and G Maule)

- 2 –“Ageless God”
- 3 –“All The Wonder”

- 4 –“All who throng the halls of heaven”
- 27 –“God’s is a world of beauty”
- 49 –“Monarch and Maker”
- 65 –“Sing praise to God”
- 66 –“Sing to God with joy and gladness”
- 76 –“The whole creation waits”
- 98 –“With Grace and Carefulness”
  
- An alternative to a hymn could be connecting the congregation to the rhythm of life found in their breath through some centring prayer
  
- Allowing the congregation to sit in silence and hear nature all around them
  
- Instead of having the organ or band play before the service, have sounds of nature playing through the sound system

## Reflecting on our worship practice

Since the start of the pandemic in 2020, the way we worship has changed and we need to reflect on the changing or newly established patterns that emerged and continue to emerge as a result of the disruption.

We can facilitate worship for all by exploring imaginative approaches to inclusion, participation and our use of technologies in ways that suit our contexts. This is not an exhaustive list, but some things we could consider are:

- Framing various parts of the worship service in accessible language to help worshippers understand the character and purpose of each part. This is essential for creating worship for all (intergenerational worship) that reflects your community of faith.
- Holding spaces for reflection and encouraging prayer to be articulated in verbal and non-verbal ways, individually and in online breakout rooms.
- In online formats the effective use of the chat function and microphone settings encourages active participation in prayer, e.g. saying the Lord’s Prayer together unmuted, in a moment of ‘holy chaos’.

- While singing in our congregations is still restricted, we can worship corporately by using antiphonal psalm readings, creeds and participative prayers.
- Using music and the arts as part of the worship encourages the use of imagination in place of sung or spoken words.
- Use of silence, sensory and kinaesthetic practices allow for experience and expression beyond regular audio and visual mediums.

The following questions might help you develop a habit of reflecting on how we create and deliver content and its effectiveness and impact, and then applying what we learn to develop our practice.

- How inclusive was the worship?  
Could the worship delivery and content be described as worship for all/  
intergenerational? Was it sensitive to different “Spiritual Styles”?
- How was the balance between passive and active participation?
- How were people empowered to connect with or encounter God?  
What helped this? What hindered this?
- How cohesive was the worship?  
Did it function well as a whole?  
How effective was each of the individual elements in fulfilling its purpose?
- How balanced was the worship?  
What themes/topics/doctrines/areas of Christian life were included?
- How did the worship connect with your context/contemporary issues?  
Was it relevant in the everyday lives of those attending and in the wider parish/  
community?  
How well did the worship connect with local and national issues?  
How well did the worship connect with world events/issues?
- What have I learned that can help me next time I plan and deliver worship?

## Useful links

Up to date information for churches around Covid-19 can be found [here](#)  
You can listen to samples of every song in the Church Hymnary 4th edition (CH4) and  
download a selection of recordings for use in worship [here](#)  
You can find an introduction to spiritual styles online [here](#)

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