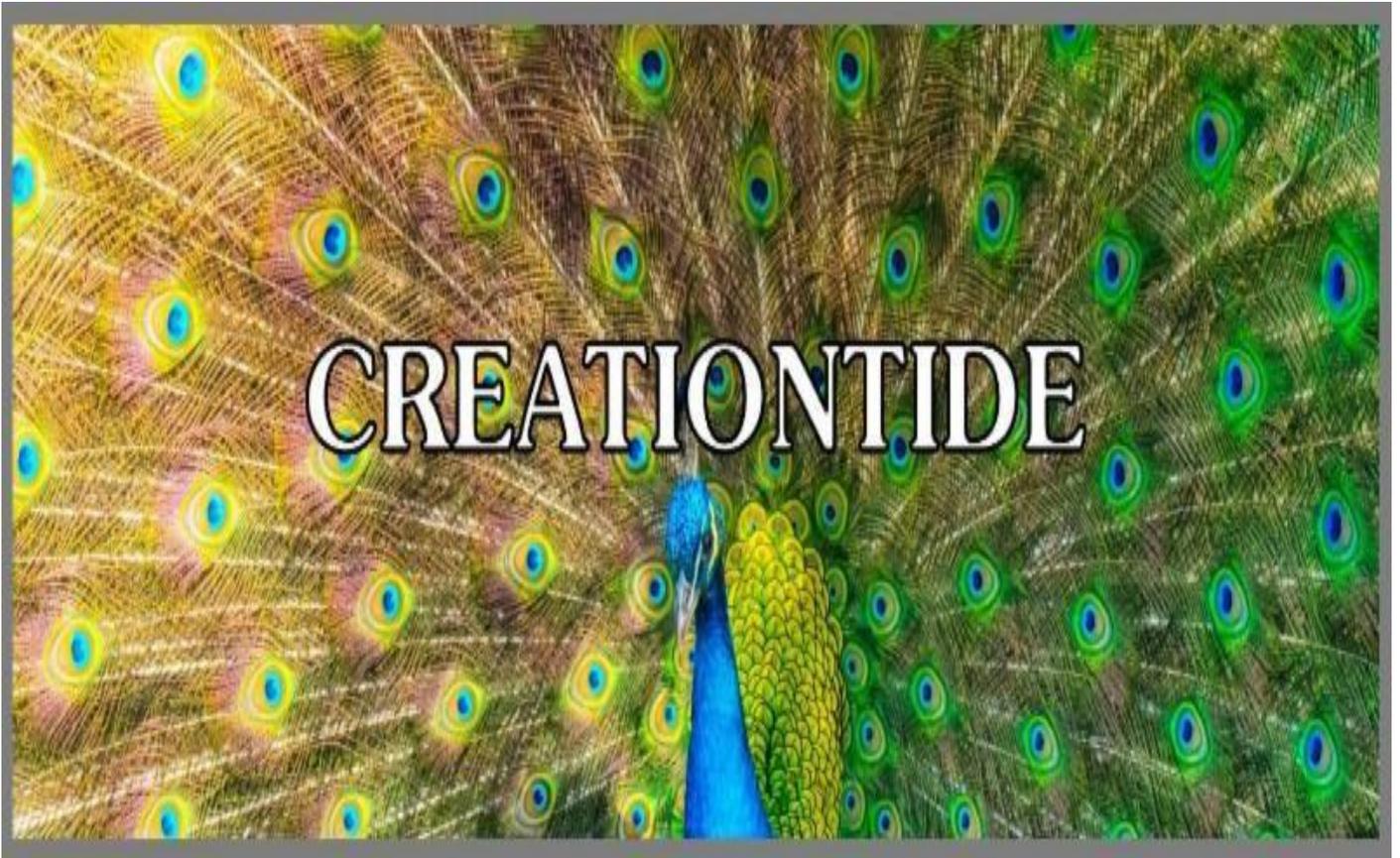


CELTIC

EVENING PRAYER



OPENING PRAYER

(Traditional Jewish)

How wonderful, O Lord, are the works of your hands.

The heavens declare your glory, the ark of the sky displays your handiwork.

In your love, you have given us the power to behold the beauty of your world,
robed in all its splendour.

**The sun and the stars, the valley and hills, the rivers and lakes all disclose
your presence.**

The roaring breakers of the seas tell of your awesome might, the beasts of the
field and the birds of the air speak of your wondrous will.

In your goodness, you have made us able to hear the music of the world.

You are in our midst.

A divine voice sings through all Creation.

Amen.

WE CONFESS

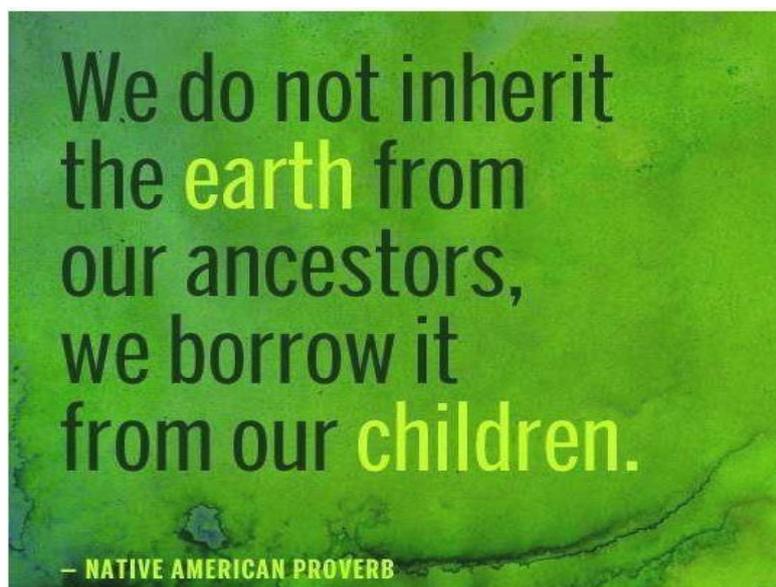
In this Season of Creation, we celebrate God the Creator, we thank God for the extraordinary riches of his grace. But we also come in sorrow for the way we have defaced creation and misused it for our own ends :

**Creator and Saviour,
we have often exploited earth for our own ends,
turned our backs on the cycles of life and forgotten we are your stewards.
Now soils become barren, air and water become unclean,
species disappear and humans are diminished.
In penitence we come to you.
God have mercy
Christ have mercy
God have mercy.**

READINGS FROM SCRIPTURE

Genesis 1 : 26-28 (King James Version) :

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. ²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. ²⁸ And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.



Psalm 24 : 1 : The earth is the Lord's and everything in it.

Psalm 115 : 16 : The heavens belong to the Lord, but the earth he has given to mankind.

John 3 : 16 : For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

John 13 : 34-35 : 'A new commandment I give you. Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this, everyone will know that you are my disciples if you love one another.'

REFLECTION

The period from 1st September to 4th October has been designated by the Church as 'Creationtide' or 'The Season of Creation'. Archbishop Justin Welby says : *'Creation is God's intricate work of art and human beings are privileged to be placed within it.'* In this season, let's find again a true vision of what being made in the image of God and caring for creation can mean and commit ourselves to action.'

In 1967, Lynn White Jnr wrote a damning essay in which he states that Christianity bears a substantial burden of guilt for the modern ecological crisis (which was in no way as serious in his day as ours). He is not alone in citing a mis-interpretation of 'dominion' and what it means to be 'made in the image of God (Genesis 1 : 26-28) as a rationale for doing with the earth as we wish. More recently, the idea of 'dominion' has been correctly interpreted as stewardship and care for Creation. To be made in the image of God is less about characteristics, than our place in the created order. Humanity can uniquely respond (with free will) to God, sharing in God's creative, sustaining role and acting as his representative in the benevolent care of Creation. We are called to 'steward' in a Christ-like way – as servants of Creation – not dictators or abusers.

In John 3:16 we read that 'God so loved the *world* ..' (not that God so loved humankind) that he sent his only Son to redeem it – *all* of it. When Jesus returns, he will restore the whole of Creation – not only the human element.

Community and relationship are central to Celtic Christianity, which cannot be accused of misinterpreting the Genesis passage. It has always embodied a deeply rooted environmental ethic. The use of the psalms is central to Celtic worship

and reflects the importance of all of God's creatures – animate and inanimate. The interconnectedness and interdependency of all Creation is described in Celtic knotwork. The natural world is revered as a revelation of the Divine and presents an opportunity of encounter with God. Stories abound of the relationship between the Celtic saints and animals. Indeed, this Season of Creation ends on 4th October, which is the Feast of St Francis of Assisi. It is highly probable that St Francis was influenced by the Celtic monastery established by St Columbanus at Bonnio (very close to where St Francis began his ministry).

Lynn White lays much blame at the door of Christianity, but also believes that the solution to the crisis lies within the Christian faith and a correct understanding of its theology : we are made in the image of God and therefore share God's love for Creation and responsibility for it. As God sustains it, so must we. Central to our faith is Jesus' commandment to 'Love God and love one another'. In despoiling Creation, we fail on both counts. Our failure to care for our planet is detrimental to us all, but, it's a sad fact that it is the world's poorest and most vulnerable who are most adversely affected. So when rain forests are burnt or cut down to make way for agriculture, the habitat of indigenous people and animals is destroyed. Creatures without a voice. Big business is often hand in hand with governments – especially where corruption is rife. Communities all over the world are moved on from ancient homelands, where their ancestors are buried – the irony is that they love the land and are the ones who'd care for it the most. In the words of Pope Francis : 'A true ecological approach must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.'

WE PRAY

May the Lord be praised by all creatures :

Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.

Praise the Lord for the world's delicate equilibrium :

**Help us to understand our relationship with Nature,
value it and keep it from destruction.**

Praise the Lord

**for a perfect Creation which covers all our needs,
but not all our ambitions.**

Lord of the universe,

fill us with your love for the earth.

**Awake in us energy to work for your world:
let us never fall into complacency, ignorance
or being overwhelmed by the task before us.**

Amen.

OUR PRAYERS FOR THE WORLD

Blessed are you, our God, for you have given us a world full of beauty and wonder. You have created us in your image. Yet we have abused our planet home and marred your image. Lord, in your goodness ... **heal your world and restore us.**



We give thanks for the balance and harmony of your Creation. We pray for all who are working to stop the pollution of land, sea and air. We ask your blessing on those who seek to care for the rain forests and the creatures who are losing their habitat. We pray for those with responsibility for governing the nations. May their decisions be made with regard for the future of the earth and the needs and rights of the poor. Lord, in your goodness ... **heal your world and restore us.**

We pray for those places where humanitarian aid is being distributed amid violence, fear and power struggles ... for volunteers, medical staff, peacekeepers, reporters and all who risk their lives to help others. We remember especially at this time the people of Yemen where civil war still rages, millions are on the brink of starvation and corona virus is rife. Lord, in your goodness ... **heal your world and restore us.**

We pray for our own country: for wise and compassionate leadership, for the virus to be brought under control, for a vaccine to be developed. We remember all who continue to be affected by the pandemic. Those who have fallen ill, those who care for them, those who have lost their jobs or homes. We pray for school children and students, that they may continue their education in safety. Lord, in your goodness ... **heal your world and restore us.**

We pray for our families and friends and the fellowship we share in your name. Silently, we name before you those we know to be suffering at this time and pray for them the assurance of your loving presence Lord, in your goodness, **heal your world and restore us.**

We remember loved ones departed, trusting that they rest in the eternal light of your love..... Lord, in your goodness, **heal your world and restore us.**

We give thanks that you are a loving and forgiving God, in whom we can be healed, restored and renewed. We commit ourselves and all of Creation to your saving power and love, as we humbly offer our prayers in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

(New Zealand Prayer Book)

Eternal Spirit,

*Earth-maker, Pain bearer, Life-giver,
Source of all that is and that shall be,
Father and Mother of us all,
Loving God, in whom is heaven:*

*The hallowing of your name echo through the universe;
The way of your justice be followed by the peoples of the world;
Your heavenly will be done by all created beings;
Your commonwealth of peace and freedom
sustain our hope and come on earth.*

*With the bread we need for today, feed us.
In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us.
In times of temptation and test, strengthen us.
From trial too great to endure, spare us.
From the grip of all that is evil, free us.
For you reign in the glory of the power that is love,
now and forever. Amen.*

BLESSING

May the world continue to surprise us,
love continue to astonish us, life continue to captivate us,
faith continue to sustain us and
may the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit
be with us and those we love and pray for, today and always. **Amen.**

