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What is Praxis?

See www.praxisworship.org.uk

Praxis was formed in 1990, sponsored by the Liturgical Commission, the Group for the Renewal of Worship (GROW) and the Alcuin Club to provide and support liturgical education in the Church of England.

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Affiliation

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Your gospel is too small

Why the environment and climate change are central for Christian faith in the 21st century, and the importance of embedding this in our liturgy

There is a growing and deepening awareness, and massive scientific evidence, that the environment and climate change is one of the biggest issues of our time. For Christians, our response to this is not simply a moral one, but it springs out of our whole understanding of how we see our place in the universe – our relatedness to God, the world, each other, and all of God's creation. It is central to the primary themes of the gospel – creation, redemption, salvation, and the resurrection order. As such, it needs to be properly expressed in worship, which both expresses our Christian faith and shapes our hearts and minds and the way we live. Looking at the central elements of the gospel through the lens of the environment and all God's creation can deepen and enlarge our understanding of the good news of God's love in Christ.

In the early 1970s I was greatly influenced by three seminal books: *Only One Earth – the Care and Maintenance of a Small Planet* (1972) by Barbara Ward and René Dubos, *Small is Beautiful – Economics as if People Mattered* (1973) by E.F. Schumacher, and *Enough is Enough* (1975) by John V. Taylor with the theme of simple living. The global population was then about 4 billion, now it is well over 7 billion and heading towards 9 billion by the mid 21st century. In addition, we are faced with huge inequalities of wealth, massive loss of biodiversity, and global warming, with potentially catastrophic effects. In short, as has been well expressed in Pope Francis's Encyclical, *Laudato Si*, we are in great need of a radical reappraisal of our culture of consumption, inner ecological conversion, and significant changes in our lifestyles.

In church life there have been some important developments such as the

establishment of a national Church of England Environment Working Group, on which I sit, and the crucial Eco-Church and Eco-Diocese programme run by A Rocha (<https://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk/>). Liturgically some very good material has been produced especially for the Creationtide season, which runs from 1 September to 4 October, embracing themes from Franciscan spirituality and the harvest festival season (<https://seasonofcreation.org/>). This is a good start, but it needs to go far deeper.

The Bible translator J.B. Phillips wrote a book entitled *Your God is Too Small* (1952) which captured his experience of a deepened understanding of God, which came from his translation work. In a similar way, if we learn to look at the themes of the gospel through the lens of the whole created order, then our theological understanding can deepen. Many central theological themes embrace all God's creation – e.g. salvation (Ephesians 1.9-10), Wisdom (Proverbs 8), the Holy Spirit (Romans 8.18-25), the Incarnation (John 1, Colossians 1.15-20), the Resurrection (2 Corinthians 5.17, 1 Corinthians 15), etc. Out of these theological building blocks we can develop a vision of the gospel which takes us beyond a narrow anthropocentrism to all God's creation. Another way of expressing this is to develop a theological language which thoroughly intertwines the five Anglican Marks of Mission rather than seeing them as separate.

The challenge for our liturgists is to develop ways of embedding and expressing these deep theological truths in our regular liturgy all year round. So it is very encouraging that Praxis has now focused on this – and I look forward to the fruits of this engagement.

✠ Richard Cheetham is the Bishop of Kingston.

Liturgy for Creation

'Greening' our worship and the Eco Liturgy initiative

When A Rocha UK launched the Eco Church initiative in 2016 they sought to offer some liturgical resources that churches engaging with the scheme could use. The result was 'Liturgies for an Eco Church' or 'Eco Liturgy', published in 2017 and available on the A Rocha Eco Church website. The environmental movement in both church and society has moved on since 2016, and there is already more focus on how we take seriously in our worship the church's calling to praise God with all creation and take action on environmental issues as part of our discipleship. So what is available to resource this concern?

Although the internet is filled with stuff, be very wary of typing something like 'creation' and 'worship' into Google, because the likelihood is that you will be directed toward resources to promote creationism, Armageddon or pagan earth rites!

What official resources does the Church of England offer to support its authorised liturgies? You might naturally turn to the *CW Times and Seasons* volume and the section entitled, 'Seasons and Festivals of the Agricultural Year'. Here we encounter a problem, for of the 37 pages of resources, only seven relate to the general theme of 'creation': most relate to some very specific occasions when we think about humanity's relationship with creation. They might be helpful, for example, on Environment Sunday, the nearest Sunday to World Environment Day, or Water Sunday, or Sea Sunday, or any other of the numerous specific occasions. But none of these deals with the general theme of creation and humanity's part in that creation, which may be a good thing, because we shouldn't be limiting our exploration of this fundamental theme in our worship to specific Sundays.

God created all things, and all creation responds in joyful praise to the Creator. It is one of the central themes of our faith and our relationship with God, like incarnation, or the cross, or resurrection.

The Orthodox churches suggested that the churches recognise a creation season a few years ago and Pope Francis echoed this in his ground-breaking encyclical, *Laudato Si'*. The season runs from 1 September to 4 October and is ecumenically recognised.

The Environmental Group of the Church of England produced 'Creationtide and Environment: resources for worship and prayer' which contains a helpful list of scriptural resources, a list of songs, hymns and music, some nice prayers based on the Anglican fifth mark of mission, and suggested further reading. Another very welcome resource is Ian Tarrant's Grove booklet W238, *How to Celebrate Creation*. And the Church of England nationally has launched a Creation tide website that has links to various prayer and worship resources, including some fully worked-out orders of service.

While the metaphorical language used to praise God's generosity in creation tends to be rather limited, *The Green Bible*, made from recycled paper, highlights in green all the passages that relate to creation, growth, the environment, and the natural world. A quick flick through shows that there is much more to biblical accounts and reflections on creation than Genesis 1 and 2. Yet, much of our language is framed by dominion (Genesis 1.28), which has been interpreted as domination of creation and separation of humanity above the created order. Because this is enshrined in the prayer and worship of the church, it has influenced environmental attitudes throughout Christian history. Another metaphor is stewardship. Often regarded as the more liberal and fluffy face of humanity lording it over creation, it nevertheless puts humanity above creation, suggesting that we can somehow improve God's created world. Yet the Bible and the teachings and tradition of the church can give us many more aspects of our relationship with creation and our thankfulness for God's abundance than these limited concepts of dominion and stewardship, which are entirely anthropocentric rather than creation-centred, or even God-centred. Here's a whistle-stop tour of a few of them.

A sacramental view regards God's creation as a gift of grace in which we participate; a sign of God's love and redemptive power. 'Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation: through your goodness we have this bread to set before you; fruit of the earth and work of human hands.' The biblical concept of covenant highlights God's promises and our responsibilities to honour God and honour creation in turn: Sabbath, Jubilee, offering the first fruits are biblical concepts that can inform both our worship and our discipleship. Christian

worship is mediated through Jesus, the first-born of creation. His incarnation as both fully human and fully divine illuminates our understanding of the relationship between heaven and earth, perfected in the person of Christ.

And then there is eschatology. The prophecy in Revelation 21 of a 'new heaven and new earth' has been understood as a replacement for all that we see around, but the word for 'new' here is *kainos* and not *neos*. *Kainos* relates to newness of quality, renewal, whereas *neos* is about being brand new at a point in time. In worship, we are, in essence, praying and preparing ourselves for the time when Christ will come again, offering a foretaste of the heavenly worship of the New Jerusalem, so this view of the importance of the creation in which we share is vital in framing our liturgy.

Eco Liturgy for an Eco Church offers a standalone liturgy built around an act of commitment to take seriously the church's calling to take action on environmental issues. Elements are also presented within orders for Morning/Evening Prayer and Holy Communion, together with other liturgical materials that can be used or adapted as appropriate. There is also an Eco Litany for devotional use on its own, or as part of prayers of penitence or intercession. Much of the content was original, but *Common Worship New Patterns for Worship* and *Times and Seasons* were also sources. The material is overwhelmingly Scripture-sourced because so much in the Bible speaks directly into these particular concerns.

Two particular liturgical themes run through the materials. Communities are encouraged to 'green' the worship space. Green is the colour closely associated with 'Ordinary Time', which is not 'ordinary' at all, but rather 'ordered' time. It allows the church to consider the mystery entire, attending to the passage of time, humanity's place within creation, and God's purposes for the world. It also contains some of the specific opportunities to celebrate God's generosity to and in the earth, and our responsibilities as part of creation. The Eco Church questionnaire identifies five areas of a church's life that are a focus for potential change and reflection: worship and teaching, church buildings, use of land, community and global relationships and awareness, and lifestyle. The worship seeks to echo this.

While encouraging lots of different resources is fine, this defining issue of our

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times more than justifies the provision of a church-wide authorised resource that congregations can use with confidence. A further *Common Worship* volume would offer a clear signal as to how seriously we take these issues. A single resource with some authoritative, common, and flexible liturgies and sample service orders would be more useful to busy worship leaders, lay ministers, and clergy. We need a volume of quality resources with a hopeful focus on worship that celebrates and inspires our discipleship for God's creation. It should be in a bright, living green, showing not only our hope for the renewal of heaven and earth at the end of the age, but also our restored relationship with the Creator in our care for this precious creation. And as we take part, we will remember that we are made in the image of God, for apart from God humanity has the terrible ability irreparably to harm, or even end, the living world that God made and Christ came to save. That, in this context, is our free will. And if we haven't learnt that message from Scripture, let alone the warnings of the global community, then, as a church, we have not been paying attention.

✠ *Matthew Rushton is Precentor of Rochester Cathedral.*

Worship and...Science?

In an age of rapidly progressing scientific discovery, from artificial intelligence to cancer research, and from space exploration to genetic engineering, how does the church help people make connections between what they experience in everyday life and what happens during worship? It might sound like an impossible question, but at Ely Cathedral we have been conducting some 'liturgical experiments' in order to connect the two and, as a by-product, have helped new and diverse audiences, who might not ordinarily engage with the church, to experience Christian worship. In 2019, we held our second 'Cathedral Science Festival', an intentionally missional project celebrating science, technology, engineering and medicine in a part of the world where science forms the foundation of the local economy. We did this through lectures, events, art, music and, most importantly, through worship. In the 50th anniversary year of the moon landings, the inspiring art and science installation, *Museum of the Moon*, by Luke Jerram,

provided the centrepiece of the Festival, and we designed liturgies which spoke to our theme 'The Sky's the Limit!' and to the events that were happening in the festival programme.

We opened the Festival with a special service of Choral Evensong, with carefully chosen psalmody, Scripture readings and music, including a newly commissioned anthem 'The Ordinances of Heaven' by the Composer in Residence at the Institute of Astronomy in Cambridge, Tim Watts. His piece for the Cathedral Choir explored the constellations and the wonder of creation through words from the book of Job. We were astonished when over 250 people attended to mark the start of the Science Festival in this way. At the heart of the Festival was a eucharistic celebration, once again with appropriate hymns, anthems (Jonathan Dove, *Seek him that maketh the Seven Stars*) and guest preacher, Professor David Wilkinson, a theologian and astrophysicist. We used what is commonly known as the 'Stars Wars' Preface of Eucharistic Prayer C of the *Episcopal Prayer Book*, giving thanks to God at whose command 'all things came into being: the vast expanse of interstellar space, galaxies, suns, the planets in their courses, and this fragile earth our island home'. Once again, by connecting our worship to the wonders of science we were able to give thanks to God for all things in creation, and expand the mind and hearts of those who came. Finally, by the light of the silvery moon hanging from the nave ceiling, we held a service of Compline by moonlight, again with adapted readings and anthems, and gave people the chance to contemplate life, the universe and everything with the help of this ancient monastic office; offering a busy world much needed space for contemplation and rest.

What can we conclude from our experiments? It seems to us that science and the scientific endeavour can be thought of as a doxological response to the living God; and when the church is brave enough to expand the horizon of our worship to take in the wonder of all things, new-born worlds can rise and adore. Combining the ancient liturgies of the church to speak into the world as it is, can make profound connections to generations of people who have come to believe the church is irrelevant, and helps expand our definition of worship. Worship and Science, far from being polar opposites, might in fact

represent a similar human response to a creator God and when working in harmony with one another, might also reinvigorate the mission of the whole church.

✠ *Victoria Johnson is a liturgist, Canon at Ely Cathedral and (prior to ordination) was a research scientist.*

Working salvation in the earth; using the psalms

Creation is never far away in the Psalms. Even if not overt, the theological implications of God as Creator are not far below the surface.

Psalms 104 is the classic creation psalm. Striking in its similarity to the Egyptian fourteenth-century BC Hymn to the Aton, it is a meditation on the wonders of God's world, and the biblical equivalent of a David Attenborough documentary. Since it is very long, I recently invited the congregations in the churches I serve to sing the whole of it in metrical form as the offertory hymn, which went down rather well. Other meditations on creation include Psalms 19, 24 and 148. (We might also include the *Benedicite* in this section, from the song of the three companions in the Greek additions to Daniel.)

Another common biblical view of creation is of God's battle against primordial chaos. The wilderness and the sea are both used as images of chaos, which the Lord is able to defeat, creating order and life. Sometimes there are even chaos monsters like Leviathan. These images all come together in Psalm 74.12-16:

Yet God my King is from of old,
working salvation in the earth.
You divided the sea by your might;
you broke the heads of the dragons in the waters.
You crushed the heads of Leviathan;
you gave him as food for the creatures of the wilderness.
You cut openings for springs and torrents;
you dried up ever-flowing streams.
Yours is the day, yours also the night;
you established the luminaries and the sun.

This section of the psalm is sandwiched between an impassioned plea for God to act in the face of national disaster – surely God who is creator can and should save. The flip side of this view are psalms like 96-98, in

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which God comes in judgement, melting the mountains, or, as in Psalm 18, coming in storm and thunder.

Creation as our source of food is another common theme, with Psalm 65 frequently used as a traditional harvest psalm.

Psalm 8, though, is perhaps most relevant to humanity's effect on the natural world. It is a statement of humanity's place in the created order – lower than the angels/gods, but higher than any other creature. Humanity is insignificant against the majesty of the heavens, ('When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established; what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?'), but morally responsible for the created order ('You have given them dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under their feet.').

Whatever sort of service we might devise for Creationtide, psalmody could very usefully be at the heart of it.

✠ *Adam Carlill is Vicar of Tilehurst St George and St Mary Magdalen and author of Psalms for the Common Era (www.psalmsforthecommonera.com)*

The green season for creation in crisis

I'm surprised how often people choose 'All things bright and beautiful' for funerals. It is a comforting song from childhood, and it also speaks of God's care for all creatures in this world. It has shaped a nation to value the stability and beauty of nature. The songs we sing and prayers we say form the way we think about the world. As we face climate meltdown, this lovely hymn, and many others like it, may not have directed our discipleship toward responding to the global environmental crisis. Of modern hymns, Graham Kendrick's 'Beauty for brokenness', is one of the few that contains lament for our treatment of the earth. The many hymns that speak of the wonder of creation, need supplementing with new songs seeking forgiveness and galvanising action.

There has been some liturgical change. At the start of the century, *Common Worship* was launched with confessions for sins against God and neighbour but also our sins of damage to God's creation. Just six years later, *Times and Seasons* was published with liturgical material that considered

environmental destruction. From the two later Additional Eucharistic Prayers that were published for use when the majority of worshippers are children, Prayer 1 includes the intercession that we might 'work for the healing of the earth'.

Sadly, one strand of theology takes a dismissive view of creation, putting emphasis on heaven as our true home, and the earth as an inferior place. Here, worship may aim for transcendence through spiritual experience, which will not encourage active discipleship towards care for people or the natural world. A stronger emphasis on resurrection and repentance for damaging God's earth, would lead us to a deeper understanding of God's love for the world and its future healing and redemption. We need to shape our worship toward creation-care to shape effective discipleship for this century.

✠ *Margot Hodson is soon to be Associate Minister in Shill Valley and Broadshire Benefice and, with Martyn Hodson, is the author of A Christian Guide to Environmental Issues (2015).*

Navigating the available materials

The seven south-western dioceses in the Church of England work together on environmental matters. During Creationtide, Eco Church Southwest emails daily thoughts and reflections from across the area, written by people in town and country churches. It is more than a roundup of news: these messages tell of Christian belief in action in those places, showing what it means in the lives of the people - and their wider communities - to be environmentally and spiritually aware. In turn this can make us think more deeply and translate their experiences into our own locality.

Creationtide runs from 1 September to 4 October, St Francis' Day. To celebrate what this means, you can easily select from the diverse mix of Creationtide worship resources for prayer and reflection on the Church of England website.

The more formal liturgy from Guildford Diocese is significant for the rich collection of alternative prayers to use with the Eucharist, from celebrating the riches of creation to apt analysis of the shortcomings of society. Real life is not left at the church door, but examined and reassessed in

worship. The hope is that worshippers will leave determined to serve the Lord anew, both in declaring care for creation to the world, and in the way that they live. The prayers will inform the rest of the week.

Worship leaders and worshippers might explore the extensive range of 'Song of Creation' readings and verse; some material is from the Bible, some accounts from other sources. Some is story, some factual, and all readings have commentary and discussion questions for individuals or groups to consider. These are truly 'thoughts for the day'. Consider 'Water of Life' as the symbol of God's life-giving Spirit (Week 4); 'Dream of the Rood': nature has the capacity to tell people about God (Week 2); or that environmental damage by chemicals, and the belief that nature existed only to serve us, prompted Rachel Carson's 1960s book *Silent Spring*, the start of the current environmental campaigns (Week 3).

✠ *Sue Mallinson is the Southwark Diocese Environmental Officer.*

Change of postage wrap

In response to a good number of messages and suggestions, this issue has been sent out in a compostable potato starch wrap instead of the plastic wrap that has been used hitherto. This has cost implications which at the moment we are bearing within the current budget, but we may need to review this at some stage.

New editor and designer for Praxis News of Worship needed in 2020

After 10 years editing and designing *Praxis News of Worship*, Gill and Tom Ambrose will step down in 2020. The Praxis Council is therefore seeking a new individual or team to produce the journal. In order to facilitate a smooth handover, it would be good to identify successors early in the year so that a new team can be inducted into the processes and procedures.

If you are interested and would like to know more about what is involved, contact Gill Ambrose: gill.ambrose@happyserver.co.uk.

Singing creation!

‘Creation sings! Each plant and tree’ is the first line of a hymn by Martin Leckebusch which can be sung to MELITA (‘Eternal Father, strong to save’) and which is one of a number on creation-related themes by this prolific Baptist hymn writer. Now in his fifties, Martin is the Executive Vice-President of the Hymn Society of Great Britain and Ireland.

His ‘When you spoke and shaped creation’ is included in resources related to climate change on the website of Hope for the Future (www.hfff.org.uk/service-resources); its metre makes it suitable for singing to several well-known hymn tunes. Look out, too, for ‘How shall we handle this planet you loaned us?’ and ‘The summer cools and fades’, headed ‘Creation’s disarray’ in the newest collection of Leckebusch hymns, *Echoes of Eternity* (Mayhew, 2018).

RSCM website

Several useful lists are available online to help in choosing music for acts of worship related to creation and to the environmental crisis. These include one put together by the Royal School of Church Music and found on its ‘Planning worship’ webpage (www.rscm.org.uk/our-resources/liturgy-worship/planning-worship): choose ‘Harvest thanksgiving including “A Time for God’s Creation”’. The lists suggest hymns, songs, anthems, children’s songs, organ music and more.

Voices for Life

In 2018 the RSCM published a *Voices for Life* festival service book with the title *God’s Green Planet*. Designed mainly for large groups of young singers, it includes hymns such as ‘How great thou art’ and Timothy Dudley-Smith’s ‘Praise the Lord of heaven’, based on Psalm 148, along with songs, simple choral settings (one uses Shirley Erena Murray’s ecological hymn text, ‘Touch the earth lightly’), prayers and readings. Some of these are from the Bible, some from other sources, including a challenging poem by Steve Turner, ‘Who made a mess of the planet?’ For details – including sample pages – see the Music Direct website (www.rscmshop.com).

Jubilate Hymns

The Jubilate Hymns website (www.jubilate.co.uk) offers suggested hymns and songs, along with a few pieces of spoken liturgy written by Michael Perry, all under the heading ‘Harvest and Creation Resources’. There are several songs from the Resound Worship team, including Joel Payne’s version

of Psalm 95, ‘Come, let’s sing to the Rock of ages’. Few of these suggestions specifically take into account our environmental crisis, but Joel is currently leading an initiative to produce songs about the earth which can be used in churches.

‘Doxecology’

He’s called this project ‘Doxecology: worshipping the God of creation’ (www.resoundworship.org/doxecology), and the deadline for submission of new songs is Friday 18 October 2019.

This ‘doxecology’ song search has been welcomed by Peter Harris, President of A Rocha International, who has said, ‘In these times of widespread assault on [God’s] creation all over the world, may these new hymns and songs of worship renew the passion of God’s people to live the good news, to lament, and to renew our hope in Christ.’

The word ‘doxecological’ has also been coined by North American writer Debra Rienstra (<https://debrarienstra.com/psychoterratica-new-words-for-a-new-earth>, 30 March 2019). ‘It describes a motivation for the work of earth-healing that arises from the Scriptures, especially the Psalms: “Praise the Lord from the earth, you great sea creatures and all ocean depths.” Lightning and hail, mountains and hills, wild animals and cattle, princes and maidens – all that hath breath is created for praise. Doxecology is striving for the mutual flourishing of humans and creatures for the praise and glory of the Creator.’

Lament

Written jointly with Ron Rienstra, Debra’s book *Worship Words: Discipling Language for Faithful Ministry* (Baker, 2009) includes a chapter on lament: ‘Lament is bringing before God our recognition that this world is full of pain, sorrow, grief and despair ... Confession is the taking of responsibility for our part in sin’s ravages. In lament, we are seeking not to place blame or locate guilt but to share in God’s sorrow over the brokenness of a good creation ... We ask questions: Why? How long? How can this be? ... Then we ask God to act, and finally express hope, even when we don’t feel especially hopeful.’ (pp.224-5)

Eco Church

The Resources section of A Rocha UK’s Eco Church website (<https://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk>) features songs and hymns, such as a 1974 song of lament by Jodi Page Clark of the Community of Celebration: ‘Look around you, can you see (*Kyrie eleison*)’. In the first verse God speaks, saying ‘all my

people, weep with me.’ In the third verse we respond, asking for God’s forgiveness and offering ourselves to take the life of God into the world. Words and music can be found in a number of hymn books.

Scottish Eco Congregation website

The Scottish Eco-Congregation website (www.ecocongregationscotland.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/m2.pdf), while selecting ‘Prayer and worship’ from the Resources menu of the South West Eco Church website (<https://ecochurchsouthwest.org.uk>) again takes you to a wide range of worship materials, including a document with a list of creation-related hymns as well as the full texts of a number of relatively recently written ones. ‘Creator Lord of planet earth’ is by Jubilate writer David Mowbray; it can be sung to REPTON (more usually paired with ‘Dear Lord and Father of mankind’). If reproduced, the authorship should be acknowledged and the use registered on the relevant copyright licence as normal.

Engage Worship

Two contributions from Engage Worship might be considered. The first, *Outdoor Worship: Engage with God in his Creation*, dates from 2016 and has lots of activities (e.g. for small groups, all-age congregations) with ‘worship responses’. <https://engageworship.org/store/product/outdoor-worship-book>
The second, *Harvest Worship: Three Services for Harvest Time*, has been published this year, and along with worship materials and practical suggestions has four songs at the back, two written to go with familiar hymn tunes. <https://engageworship.org/store/product/harvest-worship-church-service-pack>

Shirley Erena Murray

New Zealand hymn writer Shirley Erena Murray describes ‘eco-theology’ as a theme to which she frequently returns. It is worth looking out (try the Hope Publishing website, www.hopepublishing.com/murray-shirley-arena) for her ‘God of the galaxies spinning in space’, ‘Earth prayer (I am your mother, do not neglect me!)’, ‘Sing green for the good sweet earth’ (which ideally needs a songwriter to provide simple music) and ‘Touch the earth lightly’, already published in several UK collections with music by Colin Gibson, and by GIA in a gentle setting by Tony Alonso (GIA G-7175 for solo, choir, guitar and keyboard, G-7175INST for a supplementary part for melody instrument in C; the RSCM’s Music Direct should be able to supply both). Swee-Hong Lim, formerly of Singapore but now teaching

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in Toronto, has also written a lilting tune (AI HU) for 'Touch the earth lightly', not currently available in the UK, and another for Murray's 2015 hymn 'The garden of the world (Lament for the Earth)' – again, see the Hope website. Jillian Bray composed the song-like tune PORTENT, paired with Murray's 'Where are the voices for the earth?' in the Church of Scotland's *Church Hymnary* 4.

Thomas Troeger

Thomas Troeger is among North American hymn writers who have explored this territory; see, for example, 'Above the moon earth rises' in the 2013 *Ancient & Modern* and 'Through the church's prayerful singing' from Troeger's 2015 collection *Song That Blesses Earth* (OUP). The *HymnQuest* database is another invaluable tool for finding these and other hymns.

British hymn writers

Of course, many British wordsmiths have also provided creation-related texts for congregations to sing. 'Lord of all worlds, we worship and adore you' by Christopher Ellis appeared in Mayhew's *New Start Millennium* collection and refers to our stewardship of God's earth. Timothy Dudley-Smith wrote 'The God who set the stars in space' in 1998, at the request of those preparing 'An Evangelical Declaration on the Care of Creation' (find it among the resources on www.creationcare.org). It can be sung effectively to KINGSFOLD.

Wild Goose

The less traditional melody for 'We will not take what is not ours' (John L. Bell and Graham Maule) is perhaps better sung by a soloist or vocal group rather than a congregation, but is a powerful song of commitment to justice. Three hymns in the 2018 Wild Goose collection *Known Unknowns* focus on creation and our stewardship: 'All the wonder that surrounds us', 'Monarch and maker of all time and space' and 'Sing praise to God on mountain tops'.

Christopher Idle

Christopher Idle's repertoire is always worth exploring: 'Creator God, with whom we share' has a particular focus on animals, and 'God's creatures from the depths unknown' on sea, land and sky. 'The seasons, Lord, are in your hand' is headed 'when the earth goes wrong' while the importance of trees inspired 'When God made all things well'. All except the first of these come from the anthology *Trees along the River* (Lost Coin Books, 2018).

Anyone looking for songs rather than hymns will find their choice more limited, but Graham Kendrick's 'Beauty for brokenness' is an obvious choice, as is 'From the highest of heights to the depths of the sea (Indescribable)' by Laura Story and Jesse Rivers. 'Creation sings the Father's song' and 'For the gifts of heaven (Harvest Hymn)' are both Getty/Townend collaborations and available via their websites.

Resurrection songs

Although 'Is he worthy?' by Andrew Peterson and Ben Shive was released last year on an album of resurrection songs, and focuses on imagery from Revelation 5, it begins 'Do you feel the world is broken?' and later mentions creation groaning but being renewed. YouTube has a video of Chris Tomlin leading a live performance of the song, with lyrics on the screen; at the time of writing it has had 3,473,678 views! There is also a 'New Song Cafe' session featuring 'Is he worthy?' on YouTube, with an acoustic performance, the story behind the song, and tutorials on how to play it.

Walter Bruggemann

Finally, some lines from a prayer by Walter Bruggemann which might help inspire the writing of hymns and songs which respond to environmental concerns:

Teach us how to weep while we wait,
and how to hope while we weep,
and how to care while we hope.

Advice for worship bands

John Leach's new Grove booklet (W239), *Wisdom for Worship Bands: Advice from Unexpected Places*, with input from Mark Earey, should prove invaluable in the training of musicians who lead worship from a guitar or keyboard. The introduction says the book 'is an attempt to introduce into the thinking of those who are highly skilled with their guitars and songs, some other areas from which different but complementary skills might be acquired.' These areas are musicology, theology and liturgical studies. *Wisdom for Worship Bands* can be ordered from Grove Books in Cambridge (<https://grovebooks.co.uk>).

Among the wide-ranging online advice for leaders of contemporary sung worship is a wise article by Kenny Lamm, a Baptist from North Carolina, on why worshippers may drop out from singing (www.renewingworshipnc.org/nine-reasons-people-arent-singing-in-worship).

The reasons include the pitch of a song being too high or too low for many in the congregation, and the failure to have 'a common body of hymnody', partly because so many new songs are available.

Everybody sing!

John L. Bell of the Wild Goose Resource Group will be leading two events on 'Life and its Seasons in Song' in East Anglia in October, at the instigation of Richard Hubbard and the Cantus Firmus Trust (<https://cantusfirmus.org.uk/johnbell.html>).

On Saturday 26 October there will be a workshop in St Edmundsbury Cathedral at 2 pm, followed by a service at 4.30 pm. On Sunday 27 October a workshop will be held in Lion Walk Church, Colchester, at 3.30 pm, followed by a service at 6.30 pm. Both days will explore material from the Iona Community and the global church which deals with the life of Jesus (rather than his birth and death) and songs which celebrate the seasons of life. A donation of £12 is suggested for attending either workshop; book via the website above.

Book

Grove Worship W238 How to Celebrate Creation, Ian Tarrant

Questions about the care of creation and the environment are all around us and recent events have heightened our awareness even further – but they still do not often feature in our worship. This exploration of the issues starts with theological reflection, and looks at creative ways of reflecting on the environmental issues in general terms. It then offers a comprehensive overview of worship resources, including prayer, liturgy and hymnody, and will be invaluable in helping us connect our worship with our world.

Thank You

to all our contributors for helping us to produce this issue a month early - in time for Creationtide.

Events

Going out and coming in: setting God's people free

Saturday 5 October 2019

10.00 am – 3.00 pm

William Temple Church, Wythenshawe, M22 0BU Praxis North West

Speakers: Adam Carlill, Andy Stinson, Andrew Wickens

In association with the Manchester Estates Ministry Network, two foci: exploring optimal use of occasional offices and *Services of the Word*; workshops on *Psalms for the Common Era*: new, fresh translations from the Hebrew in metrical forms

Contact andrew.wickens08@btinternet.com;

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/going-out-and-coming-in-tickets-67572939481>

The Complexities of Inclusion: integrating physical, social and emotional accessibility in worship

Wednesday 30 October 2019

10.30 am – 3.30 pm

St George the Martyr, Southwark Praxis South

Speakers: Frances Young, Fiona MacMillan, Ann Memmott, Zoe Heming, Anna de Lange

A day exploring how we could provide a welcoming environment and appropriate liturgy, so that physical, social and emotional inclusion is a consistent feature of our worship. We will address these concerns through key speakers and a panel session.

Contact peter@furber.me.uk

RSCM Inspiring Music in Worship Training days for clergy, worship leaders, musicians and singers

Saturday 5 October 2019

All Saints Church, Lindfield (organised by RSCM Sussex Area)

Saturday 16 November 2019

St Andrew's Church, Taunton (organised by Praxis South West)

Tuesday 19 November 2019

Sarum College, Salisbury (organised by Sarum College)

RSCM Strengthen for Service Courses 2019:

Practical guidance on managing, maintaining and developing music in the local church

Tuesday 1 – Thursday 3 October 2019 at Foxhill House, near Chester

Contact sking@rscm.com

Ritely Understated

Tuesday 20 August 2019

11 am to about 1 pm

Room 406, Wynne Jones Building, Ellison Place, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 8ST (part of Northumbria University)

If you sometimes fear that we are not really using a ritual, ceremonial or symbolic vocabulary which is 'an intuitive interface' for 21st century Brits, you may find this conversation gathering helpful. It is for people who would like to meet together with a view to having a conversation about liturgy and culture, in order to think afresh about corporate worship in the light of popular culture. If you are interested please get in touch with the convenor, Praxis reader Andii Bowsher (andii.bowsher@northumbria.ac.uk). This is a meeting for an initial exploration when the topic will be candles. Liquid refreshments will be provided; bring a packed lunch (and a candle if you like!).

Courses at Sarum College

Taster Day

Saturday 7 September 2019,

10 am – 3 pm

An ideal opportunity to sample teaching sessions from our postgraduate programmes, have informal discussions with programme leaders and tutors, and get a sense of the Sarum College learning community.

Contact aogden@sarum.ac.uk

Pastoral Liturgy Day: Finding Our Voice in Advent

Friday 27 September, 10 am – 4 pm

How to address themes about heaven and hell, judgement and death against a backdrop of the tinsel and lights of a three-month Christmas? We will explore the opportunity to reach those for whom the

Christmas service represents their annual church visit.

Speakers: Tom Clammer and James Steven
Contact aogden@sarum.ac.uk

Approaches to Liturgical Studies

Monday 7 October 2019, 2 pm –

Thursday 10 October, 2 pm

This module will introduce students to the sources and methods used by scholars in the evaluation and interpretation of liturgical forms.

Contact aweir@sarum.ac.uk

Liturgy and Mission

Monday 2 December, 2 pm – Thursday 5 December, 2pm

The church in the west faces new challenges of maintaining and communicating its identity in what is sometimes referred to as a 'post-Christian' society. In this context the practice of public worship is receiving fresh attention as a means of articulating and embodying the *missio Dei*, the mission of God. This module will explore how recent developments in scholarship and practice are bringing the two disciplines of liturgical studies and missiology into conversation with one another.

Contact aweir@sarum.ac.uk

Report

All Good Gifts 13 June 2019

I do enjoy Praxis days. For me, it's a chance to set aside a day to study and reflect on a topical matter in depth through excellent speakers who have experience and knowledge of the matter in hand, in conversation with others who are also wrestling with the same issues in different contexts, using workshops to look at the practical applications and resources available, and all wrapped up in worship together. With the hospitality of St Luke's, Chelsea, our venue for this day, there was also the added bonus of a delicious lunch! I always learn something that is useful in the way that I lead worship and reflection, even if it isn't the thing that I thought I would learn as I set out for the day...

Around sixty of us gathered on 13th June

for a day organised by Praxis South entitled 'All Good Gifts', exploring the subject of Liturgy and the Environment. How we address the problems of environmental change is a pressing issue of our time, but with increasing awareness can come feelings of guilt, anxiety, and even despair. Our young people and others call for action, but the way forward sometimes seems far from clear, and it's difficult to think of ways in which our culture could shift from current consumption and expectations. And yet there is a growing sense of urgency; as Barack Obama stated when he addressed the United Nations climate change summit in 2014, 'We are the first generation to feel the impact of climate change, and the last generation that can do something about it.'

The actions of an individual or a community are surely determined by their values, and in his keynote address Bishop Richard Cheetham took us back to the insight throughout the Scriptures of the delight of God in all of creation. In exploring and addressing the issues it is helpful to keep this 'Why?' in focus, as we look into the 'What?' and the 'How?' Canon Matthew Rushton, in his address, shared his experience of promoting meaningful liturgy to celebrate creation and the environment, woven into all of our worship and practice rather than relegated to specific celebrations. In the workshops, Sue Mallinson, Environmental Officer for Southwark Diocese, helped us to explore more specifically the issues through the lenses of 'God's story', 'Our story' and 'My story', with lots of pointers to helpful resources and examples of ways in which she had seen congregations engage. In the liturgy workshop, led by John Tranter we looked at the new C of E 'Creationtide' website and other resources, and even got to write prayers in groups (easier than you might think!) which fed into our closing worship.

All in all a very helpful and inspiring day; many thanks to the Praxis team for all their hard work in bringing us all together and making it so worthwhile, to our speakers and workshop leaders, and of course St Luke's Chelsea for their warm and generous hospitality.

✉ *Jenny Penn is the Vicar of St Philip's, Reigate.*

I have been nursing a protest about evangelical banality, having had a cutting from a pseudonymous contributor to *Church Times* waiting in my pending tray since last November. It is titled 'No action songs, please: there are adults present'; and one of its telling thrusts reads 'Every Sunday, without fail, we, an adult congregation, are obliged to make infantile gestures to songs written for five-year-olds, after the children have gone to their groups. Every Sunday I feel my insides shrivelling up from embarrassment...' The writer throws in sermons which are like primary school talks, explanations item by item in liturgy as to why we are doing what we are doing, and the question 'Will newcomers stay when they realise that there isn't anything after the elementary monotony?'

I echo much of this, and suspect Praxis members, almost by definition, share my disquiet. But I go further – my problem lies in the range of songs in the Music Group culture, irrespective of whether or not there are actions required (though the whole business of 'actions' give rise to the more demanding question of leadership in worship, on which I am not stopping this minute...).

To begin I declare a major limitation – I am no musician (I was comforted by Tim Dudley-Smith's wonderful recent book on the art of hymn-writing: he – stretching our credulity – confessed he had little music in him, and certainly no gift for composing). But more than six decades of singing in church have taught me much wording of hymnody, and even a little about singing in tune. But I recall how unpoetic the CSSM choruses struck me as being when I first encountered them as a converted adult (Billy Graham and George Beverley Shea did rather better; I think they cherry-picked Moody and Sankey). Well, enormous creativity in the field of sung theology arose from the early 1970s onwards. *Golden Bells* gave way to *Sound of Living Waters* ('Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on me' was perhaps the only survivor from the previous era), where the editors claimed that gentleness of tone marked the Spirit's work. Nevertheless, within 20 years we were busy marching all over the land, confronting every kind of enemy, and rejoicing at victories by divine strength. To be fair there were new hymns with some sinewy strength emerging in each

decade, and there was the theological care of the Jubilate group. But in the twenty-first century the trajectory of the banal has swept far into the music groups (never to be called Worship Groups, nor, surely, their songs 'Worship Songs'). I do not know the sources of what I am asked to sing – much gained through the digital media, I guess – but, to my surprise, in the parishes where these music groups reign supreme, there is no common set of lyrics, but each group has its own unique repertoire. And the songs are so often monosyllabic, so often with no sentence structure, so often failing to connect with credal Christianity, and so often actually unsingable. One can sing for half an hour without naming Christ. Music groups perform, uncaring as to whether the congregation goes with them or not (actually in most parishes, whatever the sung agenda, Anglicans could do with music directors who teach the congregation). I, who sit often in congregations, am long accustomed to the people not singing.

I could go on – but my Column cannot.

This issue's 50th anniversary

is a curious one – it recalls a liturgy that never happened. In the years from 1963 to 1969 the Church of England was inextricably engaged in a slow process about the then-current Anglican-Methodist Scheme for Unity. The key to Stage One in the Scheme was the 'Service of Reconciliation', a specially designed rite in which Anglican bishops would lay hands on all Methodist ministers – and with a show of mutuality senior Methodist ministers would lay hands on all Anglican clergy. No-one was allowed to call this episcopal ordination of the Methodists, but they were to be treated as episcopally ordained when they emerged from the rite. In June 1969 the clergy of the Church of England underwent an activity which is well known today, *viz* a referendum. We were asked 'Will you take part in the Service of Reconciliation to inaugurate Stage One?' - and it needed overwhelming participation to be worth doing. In the event we voted: yes – 9642; no – 5621. And that voting helped it not to happen (the absolutely final vote came in General Synod in May 1972). And I don't think there has ever before or since been a Church of England clergy referendum.

✉ *Colin Buchanan is a former Bishop of Woolwich.*