

Reflecting on creation as an act of worship will not be a new activity for many. Rather for most people, the awe and wonder evoked by the splendour of the created world around us will automatically lead us into a place of worship.

We know that God created us and the world in which we live (Genesis 1) and so it should come as no surprise that we can discover God through his creation (Psalm 19 and Romans 1: 19, 20).

*“The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever” (Westminster shorter catechism)*  
Worship is, of course more than a certain act at a certain time. Worship should be a life-long activity in which we attempt to align every aspect of our lives with the life of Christ; where we live with hearts turned towards him.

In his classic book, *Celebration of Discipline*, Richard Foster describes the root of this freedom, joy and playfulness as simplicity. And he suggests that simplicity has an inward and an outward aspect. Inwardly it is a spiritual liberation: liberation from the need to accumulate, keep, hoard and consume: a liberation that comes from recognition that all we have is a gift from God and all we are is God's creation. And the God who gives and creates is One who loves us.

Outwardly simplicity will show itself in a lifestyle which is satisfied with enough, which gives freely, which is critical of propaganda and avoids addictions, which can enjoy without owning, which speaks plainly, which avoids the oppression or exploitation of other people, and which is focussed on the Kingdom of God.

This is a way of living which is needed now. But it cannot be induced by laws and rules. Tax penalties and legislation can to some extent change the way that society operates and can curb excesses, but the crucial change is going to be both outward and inward. In the gospel of Jesus Christ and in the resources of the church we can continually discover the words, the insights, and the means of changing lives for a changing world. And we can help others do so.

Simple living and ecological awareness are both traits of a worshipping life; however we also need at times to focus on the environment more specifically in our organised worship. There is no specific time set aside in our lectionary for services dedicated to creation and the environment, but just as harvest and mothering Sunday have become firmly placed in our seasonal calendar it seems appropriate for ecology to do likewise.

The European Christian Ecology Network is encouraging churches to adopt the period from the 1st September to the 2nd Sunday in October as Creation Time. And many churches are allowing this. For many of us that coincides, of course, with Harvest Thanksgiving.

Christian Ecology Network and A Rocha are encouraging people to keep the first Sunday in June as Environment Sunday because the early summer is most suitable for outdoor events, the Wildlife Trusts, promote the first week in June as "wildlife week" and the United Nations has declared June 5th as World Environment Day.

It's entirely up to you whether or not you devote a Sunday to the environment, but as the ecological crisis deepens it seems vital that we not only commit a set time to reflection and challenge, but include themes of ecology throughout our Church worship activities.

Resources for worship abound (you can do far worse than a simple Google search for "creation environment worship resources" or similar.) Below are some other options:

The European Christian Environmental Network publishes resources for worship. Go to [www.ecen.org](http://www.ecen.org) and look particularly for its worship materials under 'Creation Time'.

### **The Eucharist**

*New Patterns of Worship* (CHP 2002) contains a Holy Communion Liturgy: All Creation Worships (p458)

*Times and Seasons* (CHP 2006) has material, especially under the section The Agricultural Year (p599). Don't be put off if you live miles from the nearest cow! There is material there for everyone.

Also the Church of Scotland's *Book of Common Order* contains propers which strongly reflect the theme of Creation: index Creation, especially p136, 151

### **All Age Services of the Word**

*New Patterns of Worship* (CHP 2002) contains material for all kinds of services: index - God in Creation.

There is also a wealth of material from the Iona Community. See *The Iona Abbey Worship Book* (Wild Goose Publications 2001), especially the Service of Prayer for Justice and Peace (p73f) and the Creation Liturgy (p135f).

Also in *A Wee Worship Book* (4th Incarnation, Wild Goose Publications, 1999) the theme of God as creator is strong in many of the liturgies, not only in its acclamations of praise but also in confessions and intercessions.

### **Prayers from across the World**

By definition, environmental issues are global issues. In praying about them we are praying with people across the world.

*Harvest for the World* (Christian Aid 2006) In these prayers and readings writers around the world celebrate the goodness of creation and the miracle of growth, and also reflect on the human toil that is involved.

Janet Morley, *Bread for Tomorrow: Praying with the World's Poor* (SPCK/Christian Aid 1992)