



RESTORE OUR EARTH

A SUGGESTED 60-MINUTE PRAYER GUIDE

Below you will find a centring prayer, scripture, poetry, visio divina and a range of 'prayer actions'. Please feel free to use what you want. Permission to dip in and out, follow the suggested timings or go at your own pace.

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Depending on what 'prayer action' you choose to take, you may need a Bible, paper, art materials, gloves, shoes, bin bag, littler picker, device with Wi-Fi - scroll down to find out more before entering prayer.

INTRO

This month we are looking forward to Earth Day, exploring the theme, 'restore our earth', and praying for climate justice and COP26 (climate change conference).

If you are able and it feels comfortable, we invite you to get outdoors to pray. Maybe find a spot in your garden or at a local park. Take off your shoes. Feel the earth beneath your feet. The ground you are standing on is Holy.

For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God - Romans 1:20

CENTRING AND SILENCE

5 MINS

Get into a comfortable posture and pray,

As we enter prayer now, we pause to be still, slow our breathing, and centre ourselves in the abiding presence of Christ.

Bring your attention to your breath. Treat each breath in as an arrival. Breathe in God's presence. As you breath out, imagine letting go of future worries and responsibilities to God. Become present.

Spend 3 minutes in silence. Breathe deeply. You may like to pray this breath prayer,

[BREATHE IN]: *All of creation is a song of praise to God.*

[BREATHE OUT]: *I am part of that creation.*

OPENING SCRIPTURES

5 MINS

Read slowly, aloud or in your head. You may like to read several times:

All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. — John 1:3 (KJV)

This is what God the Lord says—

*the Creator of the heavens, who stretches them out,
who spreads out the earth with all that springs from it,
who gives breath to its people,
and life to those who walk on it: — Isaiah 42:5 (NIV)*

Let heaven celebrate! Let the earth rejoice!

Let the sea and everything in it roar!

Let the countryside and everything in it celebrate!

Then all the trees of the forest too

will shout out joyfully — Psalm 96:11-12 (CEB)

In His hand are the deep places of the earth;

The heights of the hills are His also.

The sea is His, for He made it;

And His hands formed the dry land. — Psalm 95:4-5 (NKJV)

STORY: EARTHRISE

5 MINS

Earthrise is a photograph of Earth taken from lunar orbit by astronaut William Anders on Christmas Eve, 1968, during the Apollo 8 mission. In that pre-digital age, the astronauts returned to Earth, and it was several days later before the camera film retrieved and developed. Life magazine printed the photo on a double-page spread alongside a poem by US poet laureate James Dickey.



“To say O God Almighty!
To come back!
To complete the cure
To come back
Singing with procedure
Back through the last dark
Of the moon, past the dim ritual
Random stones of oblivion, and through the blinding edge
Of moonlight in the sun
And behold
The blue planet steeped in its dream
Of reality, its calculated vision shaking with
The only love.”

- James Dickey, 1969, US Poet Laureate

WHY WAS THE EARTHRISE SO INFLUENTIAL?

Earthrise changed the way we see our planet and sparked the environmental movement as we know it today – described by nature photographer Galen Rowell as “the most influential environmental photograph ever taken.”

Despite travelling all the way to space to discover more about the moon, the astronauts of Apollo 8 discovered the Earth. A singular, bright blue ball with no signs of borders, religion or politics, just a fragile oasis floating alone in the vast infinite of space. (Adapted from this blogpost ><https://link.medium.com/5LpVVJno4eb>)

For the first time in all of time, [humans] have seen the Earth. Seen it not as continents or oceans from the little distance of a hundred miles or two or three, but seen it from the depths of space; seen it whole and round and beautiful and small... To see the Earth as it truly is, small and blue and beautiful in that eternal silence where it floats, is to see ourselves as riders on the Earth together, brothers [and sisters] on that bright loveliness in the eternal cold—brothers [and sisters] who know that they are truly brothers [and sisters].

Riders on Earth Together, Brothers in Eternal Cold, ARCHIBALD MACLEISH
[brackets added]

VISIO DIVINA

28 MINS

Visio Divina (divine seeing) is related to the prayer form Lectio Divina (divine reading), but instead of Scripture, this form of prayer uses visual elements to aid prayer. It allows God to speak into your heart through image as you notice what feelings, memories or inspiration stirs in you.

We can read nature as a sacred text, reflecting and revealing the character of God just as the words of the Bible do. As Hildegard of Bingen writes,

*Every being is praising God.
The fire has its flame and praises God,
The wind blows the flame and praises God.
In the voice we hear the word which praises God.
So all of creation is a song of praise to God.*

It is important to remember that we are all a part of the same creation, and that we all have a responsibility to care for that creation. As you engage with this visio divina, broaden your perspective to consider the experiences of other groups and people across the world. Consider these words of Zakiya Mckenzie, a Bristol-based nature writer and journalist:

Environmental injustice affects the most vulnerable people in society most; that means poor people, Black people, people in developing countries, the uneducated, single parents etc. will have fewer resources to mitigate against and respond to the effects of a worsening climate. Climate justice is, therefore, social justice! An equal society gives more people the chance to survive.

[https://climatereframe.co.uk/ClimateReframe_Download_020121-LR.pdf]

INVITATION TO PRACTISE READING NATURE AS A SACRED TEXT:

Take some time to gaze at the earthrise photo, look out of a window or, if you are able, go outside, lay back and lift your eyes to the sky.

STEP ONE - SETTLING

3 MINS

Wherever you are – outside or inside, walking or sitting – take some moments to settle into your surroundings. Become aware of your breathing, or the rhythm of your footsteps. You might want to use this breath prayer to help centre yourself:

[BREATHE IN]: *All of creation is a song of praise to God.*

[BREATHE OUT]: *I am part of that creation.*

STEP TWO - SHIMMERING

10 MINS

Begin to gaze over your surroundings, or the Earthrise image in front of you. Notice what you respond to – what shimmers or stand out. It can be either a resonance or dissonance. Linger on whatever is capturing your attention.

STEP THREE - SEEING

10 MINS

What images, memories, feelings or imagination is being stirred you as you continue to focus on whatever has captured your attention? Is there an invitation or a response that God is calling you to? What is this telling you about your relationship to the natural world? What does it reveal about the nature of God?

STEP FOUR - SAVOURING

5 MINS

Thank God for this moment of connection, and continue on your walk, or take a moment of stillness to simply rest in God's presence. Repeat this process as many times as you feel led.

PRAYER ACTIONS

15 MINS

We have come up with a range of suggested prayer actions. Read the list and choose a prayer action, or do your own thing. Let us join with creation, in praying for restoration and justice.

Option one: Go on a litter pick prayer-walk

Grab a bin bag. Put on some gloves (or take a litter picker if you have one) and boots, and take a short walk around your local neighbourhood picking up litter. Pay attention to your surroundings, the weather, the bugs and birds that catch your eye and the people you may stumbled across. Be open to God's gentle whisper.

Option two: Get the art materials out and play

Whether painting, knitting or playdoh are your thing (or not), get your creative juices flowing. Get out some art materials and create a picture, sculpture, collage or something wonderful inspired by God in nature.

Option three: Sign up to one of these climate prayer initiatives

Join the CAFOD and Christian Aid Prayer Chain for COP26. Pray without ceasing: join our chain of prayer for climate justice > <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/pray/prayer-chain>

Join Tearfund's Action Prayer Feed. Sign up to receive prayer points directly to your phone every one to two weeks > <https://www.tearfund.org/campaigns/prayer-for-the-climate>

Option three cont.:

Pray and fast on the 1st of each month for climate change and receive monthly e-newsletter with prayer resources > <https://prayandfastfortheclimate.org.uk/>

Join a monthly zoom prayer meeting of a global network of people whose prayers are as real and urgent as the climate crisis > <https://www.climateintercessors.org/>

Check out the Climate Reframe initiative, seeking to amplify voices of global majority climate experts, campaigners and advocates in the UK. Pray that God would raise up diverse voices and perspectives on the climate crisis. > <https://climatereframe.co.uk/>

Option four: Pen a creation-inspired psalm

Inspired by the images, metaphors and poetry of the Biblical psalms, write your own creation-inspired psalm, inspired by your experience of nature. Check out psalm 8, 24, 98, 104 for inspiration.

Option five: Pray for COP26 and the climate crisis

Take some specific time to pray aloud, or in your head, for the climate crisis. Pray especially for the UN Climate Change Conference in November. The COP26 summit will bring parties together to accelerate action towards the goals of the Paris Agreement and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Pray for our world leaders. Pray for unity. Pray for action. Pray for policy and legislation.

CLOSING BLESSING:

2 MINS

God of creation,

We thank you for the life that fills our earth:

From that which scurries and burrows deep in the ground, barely noticed,
To the grand and sublime.

Help us to recognise our interconnectedness with all that lives around us;
Our close neighbours and those faraway, on the front lines of catastrophic
environmental change,

Help us to own responsibility and stewardship for our natural world,
And may the work towards climate justice be a song of praise to you.

Amen