



## Starters for Sunday, 2<sup>nd</sup> September

### Creation Time Resources Day One

#### The Source of Light and Life

And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. ... And there was evening, and there was morning - the first day. ~ *The Book of Genesis*

[Genesis 1: 1 – 5](#)

[Psalm 104: 1 – 13](#)

[John 1: 1-5](#)



## Introduction to Theme



The story of the universe is being explored in ever closer detail in our time, yet the more science tells us about how we came to be here the more marvellous and mysterious and beautiful it becomes.

Instead of undermining the Biblical story of creation; it enhances it. The mystery and beauty of the creation of the universe becomes all the more spellbinding as the work of astronomers, physicists, cosmologists and others explore the universe and its origins.

We know that the earth is part of a far larger creation than the early church could have imagined and that it is in fact a tiny fragment of a vast universe. We know too that this universe was created by one ‘big bang’ about fourteen billion years ago, before which there was no form or substance. And from that big bang was created light and dark and energy and time; all of the universe and ultimately everything therein... Higgs Bosons... everything.

About 4.5 billion years ago the earth came into being. The earth was formed by an accretion of dust and gas accumulating around our sun. Its surface solidified around a hot core and the hardening crust formed the first rocks.

Some of the oldest rocks are still visible in Scotland. In northwest Sutherland the Lewisian gneiss is Pre-Cambrian in age, meaning it is more than 600 million years old. In fact the best evidence we have suggests that some of these rocks are more than two billion years old, so it is possible to touch rocks that take us back to the formative aeons of the earth.



Pre-Cambrian rocks near Durness, Sutherland

It is difficult to imagine what it means to be a billion years old but we can touch these rocks and wonder. Being in touch with this evidence of creation can be both a physical and a spiritual experience.



## Introduction to Passages

Central to the faith of our Celtic Christian ancestors – and still very much alive in many parts of the church today – is the awareness that God, and God's energy, is to be found in everything - in “every blessed thing”, as George MacLeod puts it.

*“Almighty God, Sustainer,*

*Sun behind all suns,*

*soul behind all souls,*

*everlasting reconciler of our whole beings:*

*show to us in everything we touch and in everyone we meet*

*the continued assurance of Thy presence round us:*

*lest ever we should think Thee absent.*

*In all created things Thou art there. “*

(The Whole Earth Shall Cry Glory: Iona Prayers by Rev. George F. MacLeod: Wild Goose Publications, 1985.)

Central also to the faith of all the main Christian churches is the Sacrament of Bread and Wine – where God comes to meet us in the ordinary things of the earth that God has made holy – wheat and grapes, food and drink for our souls and for our bodies, grown in the soil, watered by the rain, ripened by the sun, fashioned by human hands so that the divine purpose may once again be fulfilled.

Indeed, the Judaeo-Christian tradition is of all religious strands the most materialistic – we firmly reject the false dichotomy between body and spirit, and proclaim that God is either Lord of everything or Lord of nothing – in very truth, it must be “the **whole** earth” that “shall cry glory”.

When, therefore, we come to consider, in this Creation Time season, the centrality of “sustainable energy”, we are in fact entering into the very heart of the mystery of faith – and seeking to recognize, however inadequately, that it is God who holds our whole complex system of life in being; that it is God who sustains the daily life of the world, of the whole planetary system, and of every living being – as St. Paul puts it, in his sermon to the Greeks in Athens, “In Him we live and move and have our being.” (Acts 17:28.)

Here are some reflections on four passages from Scripture, to get started:



## Genesis 1: 1 – 5

To stand outside, at night-time, on a hillside in the country, and look up at a sky unpolluted by the street lights of the city, can be, for city-dwellers, quite a disturbing experience! But it can also, as I know from having done this often on a hillside in Moidart, be at once a humbling and a hugely enlarging experience, as you become aware both of the vastness of the universe all around you, and also of the fundamental necessity of LIGHT!

Light. Scientists tell us that “the very atom is light energy”. They measure distances between the stars in “light years”. I don't fully understand either of these statements – but they still make the hairs on the back of my neck tingle! So it is really no wonder, is it, that when the poets of the Hebrew people were searching for a way to begin the story of creation, they started with Light. And ever since then, Light has played a central part in the symbolism of the Judaeo-Christian, and indeed of many other, traditions.

Think of the Jewish Festival of Chanukah, with the lighting of the nine-branched Menorah candelabra, towards the middle of December each year. Think of the festival of Diwali, or Festival of Lights, celebrated annually by Hindus, Buddhists and Sikhs, again in the back-end of the year. And in the Christian tradition, think of the place that the lighting of candles plays in almost all the denominations; and of course of our own annual midwinter festival of the Nativity, when we celebrate the coming into our world of the One whom faith confesses to be “The Light of the World”.

We'll say a bit more about the Christian understanding of Light later. For now, I want to link these first verses of Genesis with the verses in **Acts chapter two**, when we read of the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

Both sets of verses speak of God's Spirit or Breath- “ruach” in Hebrew, “pneuma” in Greek – being the One who brings Light into being. In Genesis, it is Light for the whole of creation; in Acts, it is Light for the mixed bunch of confused disciples who formed the early church; and in both cases, what the Spirit brings about is what has been called “the chaos of the new life”.

For the Light that God gives, it seems to me, is not like the flattening light of a fluorescent tube; rather it's more like the light from the headlamps of a car, illuminating just enough of the road ahead to enable us to move forward with safety. But move we must – if we stay still, comfortable in the little patch of illumination around us, we'll never go anywhere – and the light will soon die out!

So the sustainable energy of light that God gives is for action, for movement, for creativity, for use – and is our responsibility to ensure that it's shared, and used, with justice, and with imagination, and with JOY.



**Psalm 104: 1 – 13**

Here is the Psalmist celebrating the works of God in creation both as God's gifts and also as God's servants. Christian writers and poets have often reflected on the way in which creation itself worships its creator. Here, for instance, is the Jesuit poet, Gerald Manley Hopkins:

*“The world is charged with the grandeur of God.*

*It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;*

*It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil*

*Crushed. Why do men then now not reckon his rod?*

*Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;*

*And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;*

*And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil*

*Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.*

*And for all this, nature is never spent;*

*There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;*

*And though the last lights off the black West went*

*Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs —*

*Because the Holy Ghost over the bent*

*World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.”*

The creation narratives in Genesis, as we shall see later, have a vision of humankind as being placed in the garden of God's creation, not to abuse and misuse our fellow creatures, but rather to tend them, nurture them, care for them, as a gardener cares for her garden. How much more tenderly and carefully will we do our gardening, therefore, if we share this sense, which for me the Psalmist and the Celtic Christians both have, of the created order as fellow worshippers with us of the one Creator. Yes, we are all scarred with sin. Yes, nature is also “red in tooth and claw” - as we are as well. And yes, creation waits, with us, “with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God.” (Romans 8: 19) But – and this is surely the key to just and fair sustainability – we are indeed “all in this together” - we are *all* waiting, every creature - “*earth and sea and stars and mankind*”, as the hymn puts it, for God to set us free.



**John 1: 1- 5**

The writer of the Fourth Gospel gives us here, in sublime imagery, a glimpse into the very heart of the mystery of faith, and of the creation of all life. Using his time's concept of “the Word” as a divine being, active and creative in the beginning of all things, he links it to the person of Jesus, whom he sees as having been with God then, when “*the morning stars sang together and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy.*” (Job 38: 7)

In verses 3 and 4, the Fourth Evangelist makes the crucial link between Jesus, there with God when God created Light on the first “Day” of creation, and our lives here and now, when Jesus comes to us as “the Light of the World”, to shine in the darkness, and never to be overcome .

And what energy is here! For if we truly believe this, then is not what we are being offered, through faith in Jesus, nothing less than a share in the very energy of creation itself? And more – for are we not also asked to believe that, as we are grasped by faith in the Risen Christ, we are also being offered a share in the creative energy that raised Jesus from the tomb?

God calls us, then, to take part as God's creatures in caring for all of God's creation – and offers us a share in God's creative and resurrecting energy as we seek to obey.

Of ourselves, of course, we cannot do this; indeed, our part is surely primarily one of gratitude, and of penitence, before it is anything else. So let George MacLeod once again help us to put it into words, in this final verse from another of his great prayers:

*“By the awareness of Thy good creation round us,  
by the intimations of Thy redemption in us,  
by the pulsing sense of Thy spirit round about us and between us -  
What else is left for us to do but to say sorry?  
For our earthiness and our laziness:  
our blindness and forgetting.  
What else but to kneel when we see Thee hanging there,  
bleeding there, but most certainly risen there  
and waiting till we all get together there to take Thee down.  
Give us life that we may be penitent.  
Penitent that we may live.”*



## Prayers and Congregational Responses

### Collect

Almighty and ever-living God,  
You are the author and giver of all good things.  
Graft in our hearts the love of your name,  
Increase in us true religion,  
Nourish us with all goodness,  
And of your great mercy keep us in the same;  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
Who lives and reigns  
With you and the Holy Spirit,  
One God, now and for ever.



## Creation Time Prayer

This model is based on 'Appreciative Inquiry' and offers time for silent reflection on the theme of each of the seven days. It allows the worship leader to support the congregation through a more reflective and quiet time of prayer, best placed after the sermon. This structure below gives the main stages to go through, in as unhurried a fashion as possible.

The hope of this form of prayer is that we connect with what sustains and draws us towards that which is good, rather than dwelling upon and being paralysed by the things that weigh on us or feel beyond our capacity to change.

### [1] Decide the theme of your prayer, for example

- being aware of the sources of our energy
- being concerned about our use of water
- the times when we thought about food and how we use it

### [2] Settling and beginning the Prayer

Do this in a way that is familiar to your congregation, spend time addressing God and naming the theme of the prayer. The language below may seem unusual, but acts as a prompt for people to pray, rather than a script for leading the prayer. It can of course be adapted to suit.

In prayer recalling when

- I consciously thought of how I was using energy
- how that energy was created
- how those thoughts moved me to action

### Silent reflection

[3] In prayer remembering how I felt when I made an effort to conserve energy

### Silent reflection

[4] In prayer imagining how I would feel if I made another effort to conserve energy

### Silent reflection

[5] In prayer making the commitment, promising God, that I will act

**Silent reflection** Ending the prayer, entrusting our lives into God care and love.





**You are the Source of Beauty and Glory** By Ruth Burgess

This Congregational Response takes our theme for today and weaves it with some of the lectionary readings for September 2<sup>nd</sup>, from Song of Solomon, the Letter to James and The Gospel of Mark.

You are the source of beauty and glory

You are the energy that explodes and dances

**You are the light**

You are the lover running over the mountains

You are the greening and singing of Springtime

**You are the light**

You are the good and perfect present

you are the judge of love and justice

**You are the light**

You are the truth within tradition

You are the heart of Holy wisdom

**You are the light**



## A Prayer for Gratitude

*St. Francis of Assisi*

Most High, all powerful, good Lord,  
to you all praise, glory and honor and all blessing;  
to you alone, Most High, they belong  
and no one is worthy of naming you.

Praised by you, my Lord,  
with all your creatures,  
especially Milord Brother Sun,  
who brings day, and by whom you enlighten us;  
he is beautiful, he shines with great splendor,  
of you, Most High, he is the symbol.

Praised be you, my Lord, for sister Moon and the Stars:  
in the heavens you formed them,  
clear, precious and beautiful.

Praised by you, my Lord, for Brother Wind  
and for the air and for the clouds,  
for the azure calm and for all climes  
by which you give life to your creatures.

Praised by you, my Lord, for Sister Water,  
who is very useful and humble,  
precious and chaste.

Praised by you, my Lord, for Brother Fire,  
by whom you enlighten the night:  
he is beautiful and joyous,  
indomitable and strong.

Praised by you, my Lord,  
for Sister our mother the earth  
who nourishes us and bears us,  
and produces all kinds of fruits,  
with the speckled flowers and the herbs.



## Psalm of the Cosmos

Loving God, loving God,  
all creation calls you blessed,  
and so do we, and so do we.

Loving God,  
all your creation calls you blessed.  
Your spirit imprints the whole universe with life and mystery.  
Yes, all creation proclaims your love.  
We now join this chorus of praise.

Loving God,  
all of nature calls you blessed,  
and so do we.

For you have woven an intimate tapestry  
and call it life  
and called it good.

In love you have formed a universe  
so diverse yet so related,  
and into its web you call us forth  
to walk the land and swim the sea  
with all our natural brothers and sisters.

To the stars  
we seem no more than blades of grass.  
Yet to you, each of us,  
as each blade of grass and each star,  
is an irreplaceable treasure,  
an essential companion on this journey of love.

Loving God, as you lure the whole world into salvation,  
guide us with your Spirit  
that we might not be only pilgrims on the earth,  
but pilgrims with the earth,  
journeying home to you.

Open our hearts to understand  
the intimate relationship that you have with all creation.  
Only with this faith can we hope



for tomorrow's children.  
Amen. Alleluia!

Loving God, loving God,  
all creation calls you blessed,  
and so do we, and so do we.

*Source unknown*

### **Prayer to the Creator of Light and Life**

Dear God, who is the light of all life, help us to be aware of your light and love within us and around us. When the evenings begin to draw in, when life is difficult and we find it hard to be hopeful, when we feel down and everything seems dismal, and when, eventually, we realise our own lives are coming to an end, help us to know that your light and love are always there deep down inside us and all around us.

The darkness shall not overcome the light.

**The Light of God within us and around us is greater than the darkness.**

O God who gave us life, who inhabits the realms of shimmering light, help us not to lose sight of your light when the news all seems bad, when money is tight, when life is uncertain, when the neighbours are annoying, when family life is not a bed of roses and when important relationships seem to be falling apart.

The darkness shall not overcome the light.

**The Light of God within us and around us is greater than the darkness.**

Tender, healing God, let your gentle, forgiving light shine into all the damaged, hurting parts of our lives so that when we feel strong we may be able to reflect your loving, healing light into the lives of the people around us.

The darkness shall not overcome the light.

**The Light of God within us and around us is greater than the darkness.**

God of light and peace we remember all the people in the world who suffer because of war, hurricanes, floods, famine, drought and the oppression of injustice. We ask that you will bring justice, peace, healing and plenty to these people. Give us the guiding light of your wisdom to make choices that do not add to the world's problems and to see when we are being dazzled by



the bright lights that bring only a fleeting and hollow satisfaction or when we are being blinded by our own selfishness and greed.

The darkness shall not overcome the light.

**The Light of God within us and around us is greater than the darkness.**

Heavenly father and mother of us all we remember those known to us who are unwell or going through difficult times of another sort.

(Read list from weekly sheet.)

Let us now take a moment to quietly remember any others we know who need our prayers.

The darkness shall not overcome the light.

**The Light of God within us and around us is greater than the darkness.**

O great Light of the universe illuminate us from within.

Make us lights set on lamp stands that shows others the way;  
with a generosity which spills into darkest corners,  
with a level of understanding which reveals what is true,  
and a strength of love which glows amidst distrust and fear.

Lord, hear us.

**Lord, graciously hear us.**

Posted by Karin in 2008 and can be found [here](#)



## Music Suggestions

These suggestions could work for any of the seven days of these Creation Time resources. Suggestions specific to each day are also found below.

### Songs

Called by earth and sky (printed here with permission)



Called by Earth and Sky page 1 PDF.pdf



Called by Earth and Sky page 2 PDF.pdf

We Walk his Way

[Wild Goose Resource Group](#)

Know that God is good

CH4 788

The peace of the earth

CH4 798

God's love is for everybody

CH4 765

Mayenziwe - Your will be done on earth, O Lord

CH4 805

Lord your hands have formed this world

CH4 140

Here I am Lord

CH4 251

Enemy of Apathy

CH4 593

God's will for creation

CH4 136

Heaven shall not wait

CH4 362

Let all creation dance (alt. tune 60)

CH4 149



**Songs for today's theme**

|   |                |
|---|----------------|
| The Spirit lives to set us free (walk in the light) |                |
| The stars declare their glory                       | <b>CH4 10</b>  |
| Let us with a gladsome mind                         | <b>CH4 93</b>  |
| God whose almighty word                             | <b>CH4 112</b> |
| Mothering God                                       | <b>CH4 117</b> |
| Immortal, Invisible                                 | <b>CH4 132</b> |
| Source and Sovereign                                | <b>CH4 133</b> |
| O laughing light                                    | <b>CH4 135</b> |
| Let all creation dance (alt. tune 60)               | <b>CH4 149</b> |
| Be still  | <b>CH4 189</b> |
| 211 Today I awake                                   | <b>CH4 211</b> |
| 212 Morning has broken                              | <b>CH4 212</b> |
| Is this the way you made the world?                 | <b>CH4 242</b> |
| (works to many LM tunes)                            |                |
| Hope is a candle                                    | <b>CH4 284</b> |
| Before the world began                              | <b>CH4 317</b> |
| Shine, Jesus, Shine                                 | <b>CH4 448</b> |
| Great ring of light                                 | <b>CH4 452</b> |
| We are marching (walking) in the light of God       | <b>CH4 516</b> |
| I heard the voice of Jesus say                      | <b>CH4 540</b> |
| Longing for light (Christ be our light)             | <b>CH4 543</b> |
| Christ, whose glory fills the skies                 | <b>CH4 578</b> |
| She sits like a bird                                | <b>CH4 593</b> |
| Here in this place (Gather us in)                   | <b>CH4 623</b> |



|  |         |
|--|---------|
| I danced in the morning                | CH4 404 |
| Touch the earth lightly                | CH4 243 |
| He came down                           | CH4 359 |
| Praise the One who breaks the darkness | CH4 348 |

## Additional Resources

A video on ‘Why should we care about climate change?’

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bjwmrg\\_\\_ZVw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bjwmrg__ZVw)

Nurture in his Name is a short series from the Church of England and RCC.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zli73tMV-Do>

- Eco-congregation Scotland (ECS) module 2:  
<http://uploads.ecocongregationscotland.org/uploads/m2.pdf>
- Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) <http://www.ctbi.org.uk/CJB/295>
- European Christian Environment Network  
(ECEN) <http://www.ecen.org/uploads/creationtimeliturgy08.pdf>





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For further information regarding Climate Change issues and resources please contact the Church and Society Council through **Adrian Shaw**, Climate Change Officer, [ashaw@cofscotland.org.uk](mailto:ashaw@cofscotland.org.uk)

Visit the climate change pages of the Church of Scotland website:

[http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/speak\\_out/care\\_for\\_the\\_earth](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/speak_out/care_for_the_earth)

Become an eco-congregation. Find out more at :<http://www.ecocongregationscotland.org>

For further information about **Starters for Sunday**, please contact the Faith Expression Team through **Anna Reid**, Senior Administrator, [areid@cofscotland.org.uk](mailto:areid@cofscotland.org.uk)

Please note that the views expressed in these materials are those of the individual writer and not necessarily the official view of the Church of Scotland, which can be laid down only by the General Assembly.

