



PRAYER OF AWARENESS

It is in the depths of life that we find you  
at the heart of this moment  
at the centre of our soul  
deep in the earth and its eternal stirrings  
You are the Ground of all being  
the Well-Spring of time  
Womb of the earth  
the Seed-Forces of stars.  
And so at the opening of this day  
we wait.  
not for blessings from afar  
but for You  
the very Soil of our soul  
the early Freshness of mounting  
the first Breath of day.

(Praying with the Earth by John Philip Newell)

On behalf of the Pitt St and Glenbrook Uniting Churches,  
welcome to this second week in the Season of Creation,  
From the Blue Mountains to the City, and reaching out to where ever you are this day,  
let us worship the One who makes beautiful things out of the dust.

SONG: Beautiful Things

All this pain

I wonder if I'll ever find my way

I wonder if my life could really change, at all

All this earth

Could all that is lost ever be found?

Could a garden come out from this ground, at all?

You make beautiful things

You make beautiful things out of the dust

You make beautiful things  
You make beautiful things out of us

All around,  
Hope is springing up from this old ground  
Out of chaos life is being found, in you

You make beautiful things  
You make beautiful things out of the dust  
You make beautiful things  
You make beautiful things out of us....  
You make me new,  
You are making me new  
You make me new,  
You are making me new....

PRAYER OF PRAISE & THANKSGIVING written and photographed by Kirsty

To our most amazing and loving Creator,



We thank you for the beauty and wonder that is your creation, our world. Everywhere there is beauty around us, but sometimes we are too busy or self-absorbed to see it or take in how precious it is.

Each day we can see your amazing creation all around us from the smallest flower or ladybug to wide open vistas and everything in between. We thank you for places where we can be still and let your peace wash over us.



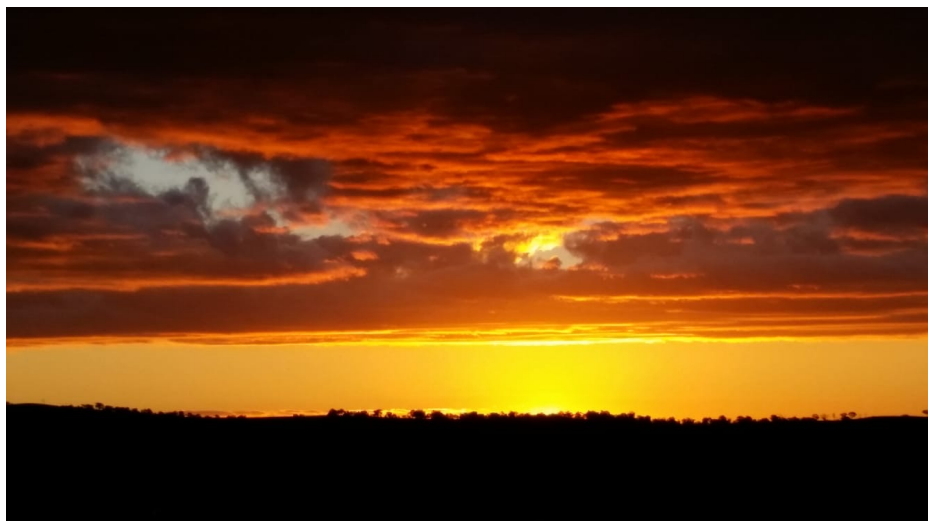
Each day we can hear your amazing creation all around us whether it be the glorious call of the magpie, the wind rustling through the trees, or the sound of a trickling stream or pounding waterfall.

Open our eyes to see, our ears to hear, and hearts to take in, the comforting and life-giving qualities of your creation.



Lord, when we are struggling with aspects of life we may be touched by something seemingly out of the blue – a beautiful flower, the play of small wrens in a garden, a spectacular rainbow glimpsed after rain, tall and grand trees along a bushwalk, or the trickle of a small stream. And yet Lord, may we realise that these are not chance occurrences, but your reminder of the beauty of life and your love for us ... even in the hard times. May the beauty and awe of your creation be a gateway for us to experience your peace and love.

Lord the splendour of the heavens, particularly at sunrise and sunset, mirrors your glory. We thank and praise you for the splendour of sunrises, sunsets and the myriad of stars that shine at night. Thank you for every new day that we experience, for every sunset we enjoy, and for the rest you give us at night.





In seeing a small flower we are reminded that your creation is as fragile as it is powerful and grand. Thank you Lord that you have given us the role of caring for, and loving, your creation. What a responsibility it is and how poorly we so often carry it out. However, we praise and thank you that every day is a new day that we can make choices for good and be conscious of our impact on the world around us.

We thank you Lord for the miracle of new life which brings delight and renewal. Each new life is a reminder of your life-giving nature, your love for all things, and your desire for relationship with us. May we never forget your love for us and the preciousness of life, and may we always be conscious of all we have to be thankful for.



Lord parts of your creation are huge, magnificent and oh so powerful. We can feel dwarfed beside such examples of your grandeur and yet instead we should simply be in awe of the magnitude of your creation. So much may be beyond our understanding but



thank you Lord that we can continue to explore and discover more about your amazing creation or simply choose to enjoy it.

In creation we can see the beautiful, the weird and the grotesque... and yet what is beauty or lack thereof... surely to each of us it is different. Certainly, in the knots and bumps of a tree trunk we can be reminded that life can also be gnarled, or difficult, and yet beautiful.



Lord help us to be thankful for the difficult moments in life that may help us learn and adapt or may simply highlight the good times the same way dark accentuates the light.



At this time of the year Lord we can immerse ourselves in the colour and heavy fragrance of Spring flowers. Thank you, Lord, for the many shades and perfumes that surround us. Just as the colour and fragrance of your creation can intoxicate us, so

too can your love. May we always be aware of the beauty that surrounds us and may we never forget the deep love you have for all of us.

When we stand and look out over an idyllic scene and contemplate the vastness of your creation help us Lord to always turn our eyes and our thoughts towards you... to give thanks for the splendour of your creation and unfathomable



love and care for each and everyone of us. Help us to be still and know that you are God!



Thank you Lord for the moments of quiet reflection that you weave into our lives if only we stop to take notice of them or make opportunities for them. If we were to anchor ourselves in your presence how much clearer our lives would be. Help us to take the time to calm our

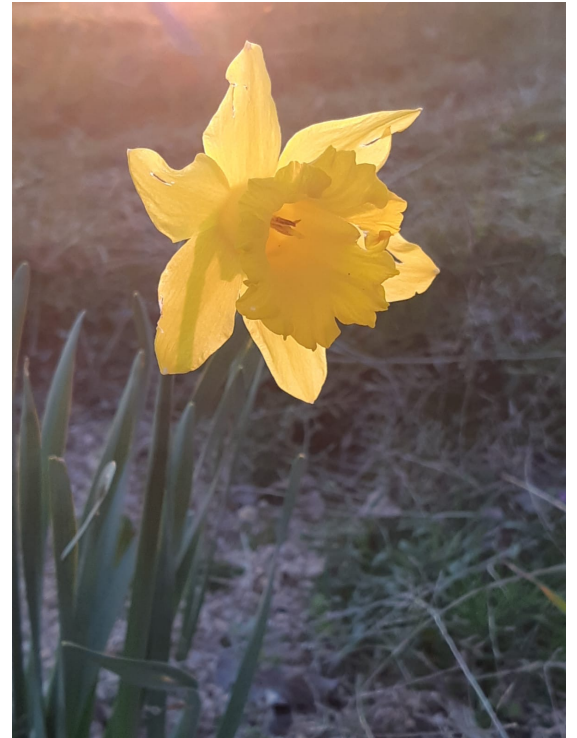




souls and to reflect on the goodness of your love and provision.

Thank you Lord for the gift of sunlight and the beauty it creates. There are so many 'wow' moments that may be fleeting but which enable us to glimpse again and again and again the awesomeness of your creation and every living thing in it. Help us to remember, as this daffodil

is illuminated by the setting sun, that we can be illuminated by your



love and be a shining light of love and hope in our world.

As we come to the end of this moment of thanking and praising you Lord, may we simply sit still and enjoy the quiet gurgle of this brook and remember that your love flows abundantly for us all. Amen.





## PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING by Katy Gerner (Pitt Street)

Creator God

Your gardens – our forests are rich with diversity

We thank you for:

The healing smell of Eucalyptus and the Australian Tea Tree

The majesty of the Wollemi pine, the Illawarra Flame Tree and the Fan Palms

The beauty of Wattle, Waratah and Wax Flowers

The cuddly cleverness of the Boab tree

The daintiness of the Sturt Desert Pea and the Kangaroo Paw

The deliciousness of the Lilly Pilly berries

The reliability of NSW Christmas Bush and the Everlasting daisies

The playful fun of the Bottlebrush and the Bird's Nest Fern

For these beautiful, beautiful gifts

We thank you

Amen

## BIBLE READINGS

Psalm 19:1-6

The heavens are telling the glory of God;  
and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.

Day to day pours forth speech,  
and night to night declares knowledge.

There is no speech, nor are there words;  
their voice is not heard;

yet their voice goes out through all the earth,  
and their words to the end of the world.

In the heavens he has set a tent for the sun,  
which comes out like a bridegroom from his wedding canopy,  
and like a strong man runs its course with joy.

Its rising is from the end of the heavens,  
and its circuit to the end of them;  
and nothing is hid from its heat.

Psalm 36:5-9

Your steadfast love, O Lord, extends to the heavens,  
your faithfulness to the clouds.

Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains,  
your judgments are like the great deep;  
you save humans and animals alike, O Lord.

How precious is your steadfast love, O God!

All people may take refuge in the shadow of your wings.  
They feast on the abundance of your house,  
and you give them drink from the river of your delights.

For with you is the fountain of life;  
in your light we see light.



### **GOD IN CREATION by Peter Berry**

Since I retired from the workforce I have retained a little bit of routine in my life and one thing I like to do each Monday morning first thing is to walk into the bush near my place. I come to a precipice facing west towards the upper Blue Mountains and I stop and contemplate and say a few words of prayer as I prepare for the week ahead and reflect on the week just past.

I look out and soak in the view of the rugged mountain ranges, their deep gorges and the pockets of cloud and mist and I am often struck with the thought that the panorama would have been much the same 100 or 1,000 years ago. I think of the European explorers who would have stood here and wondered how the heck they would ever get across. I think also of the Darug people who would have stood here over the centuries KNOWING how to get across! I think of how they lived in harmony with the environment, not trying to defeat it but to respect it and to live with an enduring spiritual connection to the natural world.

I always feel in awe of this place - the majesty of the landscape and the whole mystery and wonder of creation and the amazing realisation that somehow little old insignificant and irrelevant me is part of it all! Yes there are a few human structures that can be seen poking through the eucalypt forest and this always reminds me of the intertwining nature of our relationship with God - divine creation and human existence!

I can feel incredibly close to God here! It is always quiet. The view seems endless. I see the colour of the wildflowers along the bush track as I walk in, I see the shapes of the jutting sandstone beside and below me, I hear and feel the gentle whispers of the



breeze and the calls of the black cockatoos in the distance and somehow I feel in the presence of a deep and enduring mystery.

When we talk about God, I think we have all been shaped to a great degree by the images taught from our childhood of God seemingly being an old bloke dressed in white with a flowing silver beard sitting on a golden throne somewhere above us. Someone often described by cynics as a "Sky Daddy." Even the words of the Psalms sometimes use images like that - a benevolent Father up there somewhere watching over the earthlings below. They are such inadequate and restrictive depictions of God for we just don't have the words in our language to describe God. For God is much much more than a detached person somewhere out of our realm. God is a PRESENCE! A presence and a reality that threads through all aspects of our lives.

Perhaps our indigenous people got closer to the mark by seeing themselves as part of a Dreamtime story where the very land on which they trod was inseparable from the spiritual world.

I see God as being much more than some sort of heavenly being. To me God is the glory of the sunrise, the cooling movement of the southerly buster and the rumble of the distant thunder. God is the drooping of the golden wattle, the sun-baking of the blue-tongue lizard and the mimicry of the lyre bird. God is creation in all its splendour!

Yes, of course, we also see God through the life of Jesus but creation gives us some sort of special insight.

We often use terms like "Mother Nature" to describe the changing of the seasons and the cycle of germination of the seeds and the times of flowering and the instinctive building of a nest by the birds and we all know what it means and accept it without question. I think "Mother Nature" is a pretty good revised title for God!

One of our former ministers at St Andrew's Glenbrook (and I always say that every minister leaves something of themselves after they move on!) was Neil Smith. Neil once gave an insight about God that I have never forgotten. He said that we only ever get glimpses of God and never see the whole picture in one go.

The glimpses we get are part of a much bigger and complete whole that all our lives we want to see but are never able to. Our faith emboldens us to believe that some day we will get to see the full picture of God in a dimension so different from the human space we live in now. But for the present we must survive on glimpses!

Imagine seeing just the right hand bottom corner of the painting of the Mona Lisa and expecting to appreciate the wonder of it all! Or imagine looking at a map of Australia that began at Sydney and ended at Katoomba! Or trying to get an understanding of the Bible and stopping at the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter of Genesis! You would only be getting a glimpse of

something much much more extensive. There would be so much more wonder yet to be revealed.

I think we can view God in that same light. The glimpses we catch are wonderful but there is so much more to come!

Creation is part of the mysterious story of God.

Together let us keep looking for more glimpses of God in this wonderful world of Creation!

AMEN



## BIBLE READING

### Genesis 1

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

And God said, "Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

And God said, "Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that



were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, "Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it." And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

And God said, "Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth." And it was so. God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

And God said, "Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky." So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind." And it was so. God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.

Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."

So God created humankind in his image,  
     in the image of God he created them;  
     male and female he created them.

God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." God said, "See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.



### **SMELLING THE ROSES by Judy Johnson**

It is odd how you can have a simple memory, not dramatic or outwardly lifechanging, that can stay with you, and affect you quite profoundly for many years. I was born asking questions, and I still ask lots of questions... I struggled to understand what God was like. Church when I was young was not always helpful. Some churches don't like questions... but I really wanted to know about all the things that I believed to be real, or wanted to believe were real.. that I couldn't see or touch. I had almost decided it was all too hard..too ridiculous to believe in the intangible, when I walked past a yellow rose..happily growing in the front yard of our house. I literally stopped to smell the roses and in that moment of questioning...why so beautiful, why so fragrant, why were the petals so soft and the thorns so sharp. In that moment I no longer needed all the answers. Questions are ok. God is real. I saw beauty in creation that spoke to me of a creator. God created the beauty in the rose. All of a sudden it was ok to continue to ask questions...but perhaps not get all the answer...

Over the years I have met many people with, to me, very strange ways of responding to the wonder of God's creation. I see wonder all around. I love seeing how things grow and interact..watching ants and bees..I particularly love smelling flowers, and soil, and leaves...I have met people who think it is ok to damage the planet as Jesus is going to come back and fix it. Others have said that to use all the resources is ok as the whole planet will be destroyed anyway to make way for a new one. Others believe that we have a right to whatever we want and God will just keep it going for us, others have no belief in a creator God and no wonder in creation...What Miriam said last Sunday about the wrong interpretation of what it means for people to have dominion over creation is very true, I wasn't comfortable with a dominion image...I've been on a journey about how to live out my faith holistically for a long time and had started to make changes to



what I used and purchased, but I couldn't clearly put words to what I saw as necessary changes. Then I met a young bible teacher, a few years ago now, Matt Anslow, some of you may know him, who helped me understand a whole pile of scripture passages differently... and then Mark and I spent a weekend at his home 2 years ago at a Coming Back to Earth retreat. It was a group of like-minded people coming together to talk about the biblical implication of how we interact with our natural environment ...how can we live well. I heard that the word translated as dominion would be better understood as a master craftsman caring/working in his craft...like a person working with wood to make furniture will go with the grain, will bring out the beauty...not just hack it to pieces for firewood. It is working with, not lording over. This is extended in Genesis 2 when it talks about people working the land...a clearer picture of the word work is 'work for'..an image of serve rather than dominate. So I had a clearer biblical reference for what I was already trying to do.

But even without trying to translate words to make meaning, to me it's very simple. If I say I love God why would I trash what God has made...God looked at creation... everything from the stars and planets, to the animals, insects, birds, flowers trees, people...all of it and said this is good. But we don't do what is right and loving.. We all need to reconsider our actions. Show love and kindness, grace to the whole of God's creation...

I am incredibly blessed in my life, in trying to live my faith in creation. Mark and I are experimenting with the best ways to be more self-sufficient with our food...we have wicking beds to reduce water use, and an aquaponic system...a work in progress where at present we have our ponds, grow beds and ducks...Natasha and Siobhan. No fish as yet as it's a challenge getting the system balanced with the ducks...we're getting there. But my work outside of home is especially exciting. I work at a school called Casuarina. It is an SSP, and the students have a wide range of needs...some behaviour problems, some learning problems..many with trauma backgrounds....and I get to teach them about sustainability. I get to put my faith into action every day...caring for young people..trying to show them grace and kindness...and I get to garden with them, construct compost piles, dig frog ponds and build native habitats...we make our own soaps, cleaners, insect repellents, lip balms, and have great discussions about recycling, reusing, reducing and I get to learn from them. I remember sitting with one young man who was amazed at the look and feel of the wrinkles in a silver beet leaf....he sat in wonder. I learnt the most wonderful thing just a few months ago...I've believed, with anecdotal evidence, that gardeners are happier and healthier...but now there is extra research that supports this. God is so gracious...the consequences in Genesis of people's rebellion against God was that they would have to struggle to grow food...and it can be a struggle...but there is a bacterium found in **soil** that stimulate serotonin production, which makes you relaxed and happier. In the midst of our rebellion and struggle God's grace is revealed. Maybe we should all revisit our childhood and make mud pies more often. Gardening is so good for these young people because it's slow...

things don't happen fast when you're growing food. It gives time and space to just be in a busy world. We have time to chat and dream. They get to see that creation is beautiful..that it works well together when it's looked after....one day they might be like me, they might stop and smell a rose and meet the creator.

The challenge for all of us is to find ways to lessen the negative effect we have on our environment, to find ways to demonstrate better ways, to find ways to change conversations and help others see wonder and mystery and grace.

Amen.



SONG: 'Garden' written by Mikali Anagnostis (Leichhardt Uniting Church)

1. We're making a garden;  
We're working the ground  
In land that's bombed and torn,  
Your love soaks through the soil,  
new life can yet be born.
2. All welcome to the building;  
all invited to the fruit.  
On Earth, God's planned a garden;  
every hand that's gripped a sword can make a plough-share too.

*Come, join the work; God's bringing life,  
God's bringing life.  
Hands in the same dirt;  
enemies are one body now.*

*Come, sing new words; God's bringing life,  
 God's bringing life.  
 Lay down your swords; the wars you've learned are over now.  
 God turning our weapons into ploughs.*

3. Our hands won't be idle;  
 Our hearts won't grow cold.  
 In the barren ground before us,  
 We can see a garden, we can see a home.

4. Though drought is around us,  
 Though fires will come,  
 We've tasted the Harvest,  
 Our God has drawn us close,  
 Your love has made us one.

*Come, join the work; God's bringing life,  
 God's bringing life.  
 Hands in the same dirt;  
 enemies are one body now.  
 Come, sing new words; God's bringing life,  
 God's bringing life.  
 Lay down your swords; the wars you've learned are over now.  
 God turning our weapons into ploughs;  
 new life will come from death, somehow.*

#### PRAYER FOR THE LIFE OF THE WORLD

Our heart is comforted  
 in its awareness of You  
 Soul within our soul  
 Life within all life.  
 Our heart is comforted  
 in remembering You  
 Giver of this day  
 Gift of every moment.  
 May we be bearers of comfort.  
 May we be strong in our soul  
 to cry at the wrongs in our nations  
 to weep with the bleeding earth  
 to mourn with those who mourn this day  
 in the loss of life and lands  
 in the loss of dreams and hope.  
 May we be strong in our souls this day....

In God's strength may we open our eyes to see our destructive habits,  
 to examine our own living and to face the consequences of our actions.



Then may we seek forgiveness and so turn our lives back to caring for this world as we have been entrusted to do.

God in your grace

**Hear our prayer**

Amen.s.net

(Adapted from 'Praying with the Earth' by John Philip Newell)

BLESSING: 'For You Deep Stillness' *by Julie Perrin*

For you, deep stillness of the silent inland

For you, deep blue of the desert skies

For you, flame red of the rocks and stones

For you, sweet water from hidden springs.

From the edges seek the heartlands

and when you're burnt by the journey

may the cool winds of the hovering

Spirit soothe and replenish you.

In the name of Christ,

In the name of Christ

COMMISSIONING & BENEDICTION

We go from here mindful of our responsibility to care for all creation.

And may God give us hope for the future,

Jesus Christ show us new ways of living and loving

And the Holy Spirit spark the creativity within us

to bring renewal and reconciliation in creation.

Amen

Liturgical Resources:

[econchurcheswas.net](http://econchurcheswas.net)

'Praying with the Earth' by John Philip Newell