

Opening Prayer

Creator God, as we quieten ourselves to step more deliberately into your presence, we acknowledge you as a God of love, mercy and grace, but also a God of deep mystery:

A God who steered this magnificent creation into being yet at the same time, cares about little birds and little children dying, and the number of hairs on our heads

It is you who designed the magnificence of a sunset, the intricacies of a single flower, the power of the ocean and also the many, many creatures that live in and around it.

Yet somehow, in all this, you have the capacity to care about each one of us, scattered across continents and oceans.

Somehow you have the capacity to hear our pain and reach into our hearts and let us know you are there.

You forgive and extend grace, at times beyond our understanding.

Amazingly, you are there; whenever we turn to you, you are there.

O Lord, we confess that though you have given us a world of beauty, we have spoilt it

A world with enough food to feed everyone, and so many go hungry.

A world of riches, and we are unwilling to share.

A world to care for, and we think only of ourselves.

Forgive us, gracious God, for those times your heart is saddened by our selfishness,

For those times we have no thought for others, no cares but ours,

Enable us to see Planet Earth anew as a gift from you,

To be shared and nurtured, and all who live upon it to be loved and cared for

Lord, you are full of compassion.

You are gracious, slow to anger, and generous in mercy; with you there is always forgiveness!

Those of us who are mourning, we open our hearts to you to know your comforting presence.

those of us who are struggling, we turn to you for strength, guidance and assurance.

those of us rejoicing, we acknowledge your work in our lives in gratitude.

Gracious God, in your amazing mercy, reach out to us in ways that only you know how- how wonderful it is to know your acceptance, to know your love, despite everything.

How extraordinary it is to know and engage with a God whose nature is to forgive, to reconcile and to make new.

We say to you now; we are present, forgiven and loved and our hearts are open to you.

We thank you for the blessing of family and friends, and for the loving care which surrounds us on every side.

We thank you for challenging us with tasks which demand our best efforts, and for leading us to accomplishments which make a difference in the lives of people, many of whom we will never meet or know.

We thank you also for those disappointments and failures that lead us to acknowledge our dependence on you alone.

Grant us the gift of your Spirit, that we may know Christ and make him known; and through him, at all times and in all places, may we give thanks to you in all things.

In the name of Jesus Christ,

Amen