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| A picture containing tree, outdoor, grass, park  Description automatically generated  Horton, St Michael’s  Blue Sky Worship | For many of us the outdoors is where we feel closest to God. This resource offers a range of creative, reflective, and active ideas to engage small and larger groups in outdoor worship. The selection of suggested activities can be adapted for all age groups.  Alex Wolvers and Steve Hollinghurst |

# **Blue Sky Worship**

**Introduction to the resource**

Worship outdoors has a different feel from worship in the school building. It isn’t just ‘normal worship’ happening outside, instead it attempts to engage the pupils in a creative, prayerful, and reflective manner with creation and maybe even the creator. The more creative nature of the worship can make everyone feel more readily included. Outdoors is also the perfect setting to look at some of life’s big issues that impact both our local communities and also the wider world.

**This ‘Blue Sky Worship’ resource** attempts to bring together a number of different approaches to worship and spiritual development in an aim to be as meaningful and engaging to as many as possible.

**Spiritual Grids**

Each worship aims to have elements that enable reflection around:

**Windows, Mirrors and Doors**

**The worship is structured around this concept:**

**Spiritual Pathways:**

**This acknowledges the fact that there are many different ways to engage God / the spiritual. A variety of these pathways are used as a basis for our worship content.**

**Outline guide for each worship session:**

**Gathering**



Before worship - create a focal point that can be used as a gathering place during the worship time. This area could be a permanent fixture or a temporary one and will vary depending on what space you have. Possibilities include a campfire with logs around it to sit on, a canopy for people to gather under, an outdoor classroom area or simply picnic blankets. The important thing is not what the space is made up of but rather the fact of how it feels and the atmosphere it creates. It needs to be a place where the pupils can feel comfortable and relaxed – a ‘thin place’ where it seems heaven and earth come closer.

Once everyone is gathered and ready for worship you may want to start with a simple gathering and focusing activity that allows a sense of calm to be established. A bible reading and simple greeting may be used at this time.

**Windows**

**This is an opportunity to explore the main theme of the worship in a creative way that engages fully with the environment.**

**Mirrors**

**This is a time for both individual and group reflection. The group would once again gather around a focal point with a time of bringing together thoughts and questions**

**Doors**

**You may want to end your worship session together with a ‘now what?’ challenge. This may be followed by a blessing or a short prayer as you look to move back into the rest of the day.**

**Content for Small Group Worship**

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**Outline themes and connected Bible verses for small group outdoor worship sessions:**

**Session 1 - The gift of life**

**Genesis 1**

**Psalm 8:3-6**

**Session 2 - The good things of life**

**Psalm 104:10-28**

**Psalm 34:8 Taste and see the Lord is good**

**Small Group Worship**

**Session One - *The gift of life***

**Gathering**

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**Once everything is set up and the group are gathered ready for worship you may want to start by lighting a candle or focusing on a key object. Explain that this helps us to remember that we are here as part of worship.**

**One of the following greetings may then be used:**

**Leader: Peace be with you.**

**Others: And also, with you.**

**Leader: This is the day that the Lord has made**

**Others: Let us rejoice and be glad in it.**

**Leader: Welcome to worship**

**Others: It is good to be together**

**Explain: today you will be thinking about one of the oldest poems that has ever been written. Even though we do not know who actually wrote it, it is one of the most famous poems ever written. It is a poem that describes how God spoke and through His words, life began. It was originally written as song of worship.**

**Read: Genesis 1**

**For younger ages you may want to use ‘The Lion Storyteller Bible’ rather than the version below.**

**Be creative with how you read the passage.**

**You may want to have different people reading each day. You may want to have everyone joining in with the chorus: Evening passed, and morning came. This was the ??? day (the challenge will be remembering which day you are on). Another suggestion would be to have a black sheet set out in the middle of the gathering and objects or pictures can be added to represent each of the days as they are read. Alternatively, you may want everyone to sit with their eyes closed listening to the poem. Have them imagine that they are sitting in the middle of creation. After each day ask them to think about what they can now see and hear. How do they feel as they experience creation unfolding in front of them?**

**The Beginning of the World**

**In the beginning God created the sky and the earth. The earth was empty and had no form. Darkness covered the ocean, and God’s Spirit was moving over the water.**

**Then God said, “Let there be light!” And there was light. God saw that the light was good. So, he divided the light from the darkness. God named the light “day” and the darkness “night.” Evening passed, and morning came. This was the first day.**

**Then God said, “Let there be something to divide the water in two!” So, God made the air to divide the water in two. Some of the water was above the air, and some of the water was below it. God named the air “sky.” Evening passed, and morning came. This was the second day.**

**Then God said, “Let the water under the sky be gathered together so the dry land will appear.” And it happened. God named the dry land “earth.” He named the water that was gathered together “seas.” God saw that this was good.**

**Then God said, “Let the earth produce plants. Some plants will make grain for seeds. Others will make fruit with seeds in it. Every seed will produce more of its own kind of plant.” And it happened. The earth produced plants. Some plants had grain for seeds. The trees made fruit with seeds in it. Each seed grew its own kind of plant. God saw that all this was good. Evening passed, and morning came. This was the third day.**

**Then God said, “Let there be lights in the sky to separate day from night. These lights will be used for signs, seasons, days, and years. They will be in the sky to give light to the earth.” And it happened.**

**So, God made the two large lights. He made the brighter light to rule the day. He made the smaller light to rule the night. He also made the stars. God put all these in the sky to shine on the earth. They are to rule over the day and over the night. He put them there to separate the light from the darkness. God saw that all these things were good. Evening passed, and morning came. This was the fourth day.**

**Then God said, “Let the water be filled with living things. And let birds fly in the air above the earth.”**

**So, God created the large sea animals. He created every living thing that moves in the sea. The sea is filled with these living things. Each one produces more of its own kind. God also made every bird that flies. And each bird produces more of its own kind. God saw that this was good. God blessed them and said, “Have many young ones and grow in number. Fill the water of the seas, and let the birds grow in number on the earth.” Evening passed, and morning came. This was the fifth day.**

**Then God said, “Let the earth be filled with animals. And let each produce more of its own kind. Let there be tame animals and small crawling animals and wild animals. And let each produce more of its kind.” And it happened.**

**So, God made the wild animals, the tame animals, and all the small crawling animals to produce more of their own kind. God saw that this was good.**

**Then God said, “Let us make human beings in our image and likeness. And let them rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky. Let them rule over the tame animals, over all the earth and over all the small crawling animals on the earth.”**

**So, God created human beings in his image. In the image of God, he created them. He created them male and female. God blessed them and said, “Have many children and grow in number. Fill the earth and be its master. Rule over the fish in the sea and over the birds in the sky. Rule over every living thing that moves on the earth.”**

**God said, “Look, I have given you all the plants that have grain for seeds. And I have given you all the trees whose fruits have seeds in them. They will be food for you. I have given all the green plants to all the animals to eat. They will be food for every wild animal, every bird of the air and every small crawling animal.” And it happened. God looked at everything he had made, and it was very good. Evening passed, and morning came. This was the sixth day.**

**So, the sky, the earth and all that filled them were finished. By the seventh day God finished the work he had been doing. So, on the seventh day he rested from all his work. God blessed the seventh day and made it a holy day. He made it holy because on that day he rested. He rested from all the work he had done in creating the world.**

**Windows**

**Exploring creation with awe and wonder:**

A picture containing ground, rock, plant, soil

Description automatically generated**Below are ideas of ways to explore the significance of the text more with your group. You may decide to do one or more of the suggestions. What you decide to do will depend on the size and age of your group, as well as the setting.**

* **Allow the group time now to explore the area you are meeting in. Encourage them to imagine that this is the first time that they have ever seen this space –just like Adam and Eve exploring this amazing new world that God has created just for them. Look for the smallest signs of life, look up at the vastness of the sky, listen for the sounds of life that you can hear around you, be amazed at the colours that you can see and be awed at the variety of life that there is within creation.**
* **Allow the group to go off and explore but encourage them to do so as calmly and quietly as possible so that they do not miss anything, and so that they also have that opportunity to listen as well as see.**
* **Offer a magnifying glass to anyone who would like to use it. Encourage them to look at the smallest of details in the natural world around them.**
* **Give anyone in the group who would like to do this - a sketch pad and encourage them to sketch the most amazing thing that they find (they can define for themselves what they consider as amazing). Alternatively take photographs on iPads. Later these images could be made into a reflective area within the classroom.**
* **Set a challenge for the group to find as many elements of the creation story as they can – plants, insects, birds, clouds, the sun, water. This could be done as an ‘I Spy’ sheet if a focus is needed especially for the younger children.**
* **Allow time to simply lie back and rest – looking up at the sky and being amazed at the beauty of the clouds and sunlight. Listen to the noises around them – evidence of creation.**
* **Humans are an amazing part of creation; encourage them in groups to sketch one another or have available mirrors so that they can sketch themselves.**

**Mirrors**

**Have the group gather once again around the focal point.**

**You may want to use the following questions to help with a reflection time:**

* **What did you see that amazed you?**
* **What was the smallest thing that you saw?**
* **What did you notice this time that you have never really noticed before?**
* **When you think about our world what hopes, and concerns do you have for the future?**
* **How did you feel to be looking at and listening to creation so carefully?**
* **If you could ask God, any question about what you saw or heard today what would you ask?**

**You may want to use the words of Psalm 8 as a prayer at this point or encourage the group to do popcorn prayers – quick, short prayers of thanks that give everyone who wants to time to pray.**

**Explain that in the Bible there are a collection of worship songs that we call the Psalms. There are a number of these that are based on creation.**

**Psalm 8 (an extract)**

**When I consider your heavens,**

**the work of your fingers,**

**the moon and the stars,**

**which you have set in place,**

**what is mankind that you are mindful of them,**

**human beings that you care for them?**

**You have made them a little lower than the angels**

**and crowned them with glory and honour.**

**You made them rulers over the works of your hands,**

**you put everything under their feet:**

**all flocks and herds,**

**and the animals of the wild,**

**the birds in the sky,**

**and the fish in the sea,**

**all that swim the paths of the seas.**

**Lord, our Lord,**

**how majestic is your name in all the earth!**

**Amen**

**Doors**

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**This week if we recognise that humans are a special part of creation think about:**

**• What do you see as your place in creation?**

**• How should we treat all creation?**

**• How should we see ourselves?**

**• How should we behave towards one another?**

**You may want to finish with this blessing:**

**May we have eyes that see God’s beauty in every plant. May we give thanks for life as we hear each bird’s song. May we know God’s blessing as we see the light of the sun. May my heart be willing to care for all of Creation.**

**Session Two - *The good things of life***

**Gathering**

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**Once everything is set up and the group are gathered ready for worship you may want to start by lighting a candle or focusing on a key object. Explain that this helps us to remember that we are here as part of worship.**

**One of the following greetings may then be used:**

**Leader: Peace be with you.**

**Others: And also, with you.**

**Leader: This is the day that the Lord has made**

**Others: Let us rejoice and be glad in it.**

**Leader: Welcome to worship**

**Others: It is good to be together**

**Explain: today we will be thinking about how we rely on the world around us for food. As people we cannot survive without the land providing us with food and at the same time the land cannot thrive unless we learn to treat it with respect. It has often been argued that the land should not be seen as something that we own but something that we hold as a gift to pass on.**

***“for the land is our mother, nourishing all her children, beasts, birds, fish and all people. The woods, the streams, everything on it belongs to everybody and is for the use of all.”***

**Massasoit Sachem**

**Read: Psalm 104: 10-28**

***10 He makes springs pour water into the ravines,***

***it flows between the mountains.***

***11 They give water to all the beasts of the field,***

***the wild donkeys quench their thirst.***

***12 The birds of the sky nest by the waters,***

***they sing among the branches.***

***13 He waters the mountains from his upper chambers,***

***the land is satisfied by the fruit of his work.***

***14 He makes grass grow for the cattle,***

***and plants for people to cultivate—***

***bringing forth food from the earth:***

***15 wine that gladdens human hearts,***

***oil to make their faces shine,***

***and bread that sustains their hearts.***

***16 The trees of the Lord are well watered,***

***the cedars of Lebanon that he planted.***

***17 There the birds make their nests,***

***the stork has its home in the junipers.***

***18 The high mountains belong to the wild goats,***

***the crags are a refuge for the hyrax.***

***19 He made the moon to mark the seasons,***

***and the sun knows when to go down.***

***20 You bring darkness, it becomes night,***

***and all the beasts of the forest prowl.***

***21 The lions roar for their prey***

***and seek their food from God.***

***22 The sun rises, and they steal away,***

***they return and lie down in their dens.***

***23 Then people go out to their work,***

***to their labour until evening.***

***24 How many are your works, Lord!***

***In wisdom you made them all,***

***the earth is full of your creatures.***

***25 There is the sea, vast and spacious,***

***teeming with creatures beyond number—***

***living things both large and small.***

***26 There the ships go to and fro,***

***and Leviathan, which you formed to frolic there.***

***27 All creatures look to you***

***to give them their food at the proper time.***

***28 When you give it to them,***

***they gather it up,***

***when you open your hand,***

***they are satisfied with good things.***

**Windows**

**Considering God’s provision**



Below are ideas of ways to explore the significance of the text more with your group. You may decide to do one or more of the suggestions. What you decide to do will depend on the size and age of your group, as well as your setting.

* Allow time for your group to consider the imagery in this psalm. This is a beautiful image of a world working well. Explore your outdoor worship space – where can you see examples of the ecosystem that the psalm describes. Sadly, the world with its perfect balance that the psalm describes is fast being destroyed – where can you see examples of this in your environment? Consider ways that this could be reversed. Are there ways that you can improve your school environment and redress the balance? Over time begin to put these plans into action.
* Historically, the food industry prioritised mass yield, and uniformity over flavour, nutrition, and sustainability. As a result, we are losing plant and animal species at an alarming rate… About 75 percent of the world’s food comes from just 12 plants and 5 animal species. Almost half of our plant-derived calories come from just three foods: wheat, corn, and rice. While estimates vary, it is believed that there are over 30,000 edible plants, and we only eat 150 of them. Thirty percent of livestock breeds are at risk of extinction, and six breeds are being lost each month. (Taken from: <https://foodtechconnect.com/2019/01/07/biodiverse-food-intersection-taste-sustainability/> ). If your setting allows it, explore what edible things there are around you – things that you may never have considered as edible before. There are a number of websites that will help you to prepare for this: (**NB** it goes without saying that you need to be sure a plant is edible before you eat it!) <https://www.hedgesdirect.co.uk/acatalog/Edible-Hedging-Guide.html>

<https://www.growveg.co.uk/guides/creating-an-edible-hedge-for-foraging-at-home/>

If you do not have a setting where this is possible bring in fruits, berries, leaves etc. for the pupils to taste.

* Invite the pupils to draw some of the food that you have available. Take time to look at the different shapes, colours, and textures. Talk about people’s favourite food and think about where it comes from.
* **If you do not have an allotment area or raised bed area begin a plan to put one together. Consider how looking after the environment and re-establishing the balance that is spoken about in the Bible could be seen as part of worship?**
* **If you are growing things – see what is ready for harvesting. Plan some recipes that you can make using the produce that you have harvested. Is this food something that you could share with your wider local community?**
* **What wildlife do you have around your school? Insects and birds are vital parts of our ecosystem. Consider making your environment more friendly for them. Bee friendly plants, bug hotels and bird feeders are all easy ways of doing this. How can this be part of your worship?**

**Mirrors**

**Have the group gather once again around the focal point.**

**You may want to use the following questions to help with a reflection time:**

* **What has amazed you from the time together today?**
* **When you think about the state of the world today compared to the image in the Bible – what concerns or worries do you have?**
* **What are the main challenges do you think facing our world going forward?**
* **What part do you think we can play going forward in looking after our world?**
* **If you could ask God one thing about what you have seen or heard today what would it be?**

**You may want to use the following prayer as a time of reflection or**

**encourage the group to do popcorn prayers – quick, short prayers of thanks that give everyone who wants to time to pray.**

**‘The Bible teaches us to pray: Give us today our daily bread.**

**We know that the world can provide enough to feed everyone on it and yet 3 billion people struggle to afford to buy their daily bread.**

**We pray for an end to food poverty.**

**We pray that we will be stirred into action to play our part in redressing the injustice of hunger that is in the world.**

**We think of those who are going without food today, by your Grace may they be fed today.’ AMEN**

**Or you may want to use all or part of Isaiah 58 as a time of reflection (an extract can be found below):**

**True fasting**

**‘Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen:**

**to loosen the chains of injustice**

**and untie the cords of the yoke,**

**to set the oppressed free**

**and break every yoke?**

**Is it not to share your food with the hungry**

**and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter –**

**when you see the naked, to clothe them,**

**and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?**

**Then your light will break forth like the dawn,**

**and your healing will quickly appear,**

**then your righteousness will go before you,**

**and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard.**

**Then you will call, and the Lord will answer,**

**you will cry for help, and he will say: here am I.**

**‘If you do away with the yoke of oppression,**

**with the pointing finger and malicious talk,**

**and if you spend yourselves on behalf of the hungry**

**and satisfy the needs of the oppressed,**

**then your light will rise in the darkness,**

**and your night will become like the noonday.**

**Doors**

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**We have acknowledged that the world produces enough food for all our needs and yet so many still go hungry. Therefore, during this coming week think about:**

* **Do we have a healthy appreciation of the wide variety of food that there is in the world?**

**• How can we show our gratitude more for our food?**

* **How can we avoid so much food waste in our homes, communities, and schools?**
* **How should we behave towards one another – how can we as individuals and also as a school help combat the issue of food poverty that impacts so many people?**

**You may want to finish with this blessing:**

**May we always have our daily bread and may we never take it for granted.**

**May we have thankful hearts that are willing to share with those who need it most.**

**And may we continue to seek justice and righteousness for all so that no-one goes hungry tomorrow.**

**Content**

**Large Group Worship**

**A picture containing tree, outdoor, grass, forest

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**The sacred seasonal themes are suited for both larger, as well as small group, outdoor worship.**

**Autumn Term**

**Autumn Equinox and Feast of St. Michael**

**The Word of Life - God’s Book of Creation**

**Feasts of All Saints and All Souls**

**Winter Solstice, Advent, and the Feast of Christmas (December 25th)**

**Autumn Term**

**Autumn Equinox and Feast of St. Michael**

**Themes: Change, Darkness and Light**

**Gathering**

**Once everything is set up and the group are gathered ready for worship you may want to start by lighting a candle or focusing on a key object. Explain that this helps us to remember that we are here as part of worship.**

**One of the following greetings may then be used:**

**Leader: Peace be with you.**

**Others: And also, with you.**

**Leader: This is the day that the Lord has made**

**Others: Let us rejoice and be glad in it.**

**Leader: Welcome to worship**

**Others: It is good to be together**

**Engage**

**Begin by thinking about change – moving from the known to the unknown:**

**Do you like change?**

**It has been said that the only constant thing in life is change.**

**How do you cope with change?**

**As with our lives nature is also in a continual state of change…**

**Look around you - what seasonal changes do you notice around you at the moment?**

**Have you noticed the nights getting longer and the days shorter?**

**What do you like about this time of the year? What do you not like?**

**Explain**

**This is the time of the Autumn Equinox. The equinoxes are the times when day and night are of equal length. After the Autumn Equinox the days grow shorter than the nights which are longer, and we enter what in the northern hemisphere is the ‘dark half’ of the year. This is traditionally seen as a mysterious time of the year – partly due to the long, dark nights. So often as human beings we allow our fears to take over from our logical mind and people are often said to be afraid when it is dark because they fear there may be dangers they cannot see.**

**Light in the darkness…**

**Michael, one of the main angels mentioned in the bible, was traditionally seen as the one who protects people from evil. In the early church, churches founded at places that might be considered dangerous, like sea coasts, were often dedicated to St Michael so he could offer protection. This is why St Michael is associated with the Autumn Equinox, to remind us, as we enter the dark half of the year that God goes with us to protect us from the things, we are afraid of.**

**An encounter with an Angel**

**The autumn Equinox is also the annunciation of John the Baptist.**

**Read or retell the account from Luke’s gospel: Luke 1:5-25.**

**Explain**

**Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth had been praying for a child for many years, but they were now old and had all but given up hope. When Zechariah met with the angel, unsurprisingly perhaps he was afraid, but the angel told him not to be afraid and went on to tell him the good news that Elizabeth would have a son who they were to name John. Zechariah found the idea that he and his wife Elizabeth would have a child when they were so old really hard to believe, and this lack of belief meant that he was not able to speak. Zechariah chose fear over trust**

**Respond and Sending:**

**Do not be afraid…**

**As we enter this season of change there is one message that we can take with us – do not be afraid. Change is inevitable but we can decide to allow a fear of change and the unknown to overcome us, or we can learn to trust.**

**What difference would it make to you if you knew there was someone looking out for you?**

**The Celtic saints often asked for God’s protection by prayers known as a Caim. One such a prayer is known as the Breast Plate of St Patrick. The central section of this prayer works particularly well as an invitation for God to be with us and keep us safe. When praying this the Celtic Saints would raise their hand and point up with their first finger. Then they would draw a circle round their head as they prayed the words. As the worship draws to an end you may want to use the prayer as a blessing:**

Christ with me, Christ before me,  
Christ behind me, Christ within me,  
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,  
Christ at my right, Christ at my left, Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of me,  
Christ in the mouth of every man who speaks to me,  
Christ in the eye of every man that sees me,  
Christ in the ear of every man that hears me.

**God’s Book of Creation**

**Themes: St Francis of Assisi, creation, and our responsibility**

**Gathering**

**Once everything is set up and the group are gathered ready for worship you may want to start by lighting a candle or focusing on a key object. Explain that this helps us to remember that we are here as part of worship.**

**One of the following greetings may then be used:**

**Leader: Peace be with you.**

**Others: And also, with you.**

**Leader: This is the day that the Lord has made**

**Others: Let us rejoice and be glad in it.**

**Leader: Welcome to worship**

**Others: It is good to be together**

**Engage**

**Begin by thinking about whether God speaks? And if so, how?**

Do you think God speaks to us?

If God was to speak to us, how do you think it would be? Would it be through music, art, other people, sacred books or even through creation itself?

**Explain:**

Many early thinkers and writers in the Church saw God as speaking to people through ‘two books’ – one written, one not. The first of these was the creation, which reflected God’s character and was seen as a gift of God. The second, the bible, which recorded people’s relationship with God and creation. For Christians, the Bible, is especially important as it records the life and teaching of Jesus.

**As it says in Psalm 19**

The heavens declare the glory of God,

the skies proclaim the work of his hands.

Day after day they pour forth speech,

night after night they reveal knowledge.

They have no speech; they use no words,

no sound is heard from them.

Yet their voice goes out into all the earth,

their words to the ends of the world.

In the heavens God has pitched a tent for the sun.

**God speaks through creation**

St Francis was a wealthy young man in 12th century Italy but gave up his wealth to help the poor and sick. He founded a religious order, the Franciscans who still exist today. He was very aware of God in the natural world and saw the creatures and even natural objects as his brothers and sisters. Because of this there were many stories of Francis talking to different creatures. In a particularly famous story, he spoke with a wolf who had been attacking people in the town of Gubbio. The wolf agreed to stop attacking them if in turn they gave him food. (The full account can be found here: <https://tamingthewolf.com/saint-francis-and-the-wolf/> ). Whatever we believe happened between Francis and the wolf – what can we learn from this account? Do we recognise that all creation has a right to exist in peace? What has been the result of hundreds of years of human’s believing that they can do what they like with creation?

St Francis wrote a prayer that is often also sung about our relationship to creation, called the **canticle of the creatures**. As you read this consider the amazing world that we have been gifted:

All praise be yours, My Lord, through all that you have made.

And first my lord Brother Sun, who brings the day....

How beautiful is he, how radiant in all his splendour!

Of you, Most High, he bears the likeness.

All praise be yours, my Lord, through Sister Moon and Stars.

In the heavens you have made them, bright and precious and fair.

All praise be yours, my Lord, through Brothers Wind and Air....

All praise be yours, my Lord, through Sister Water, so useful, lowly, precious, and pure.

All praise be yours, my Lord, through Brother Fire, through whom you brighten up the night....

All praise be yours, my Lord, through Sister Earth, our mother who feeds us,

And produces various fruits with coloured flowers and herbs.

Praise and bless my Lord, and give him thanks,

And serve him with great humility.

**St Francis Day is the 4th of October** and sometimes people hold services to bless animals, often their pets, on that day of the year or near to it.

**Respond**

**To think and discuss**

As you look around at creation what do you think it tells you about God?

Do you have that same sense that Francis and the psalm writer had of creation praising God?

People often say they find God in nature, do you feel close to God when you are out in nature? What things do you see, hear or experience in which you sense God?

You might spend this time outside being still and finding what sights and sounds you notice. Try to pick out just those sounds of nature.

As humans we have a unique relationship with nature compared to other creatures. From the beginning we were given the responsibility to look after the rest or creation. We were given authority – but what does that mean? Does that mean we can use it as we want, without thinking of the consequences? There are many creatures that relate to humans - animals that work with us like police dogs and horses, dogs who aid those who have difficulty seeing or hearing, sheep dogs and others. We also have a lot of animals on farms that are raised to feed people either with dairy products like eggs, milk, and cheese or through meat.

**BUT** how should we treat these and all other animals? How would we behave towards all of creation if we were to see it through the eyes of St Francis?

**Sending**

**Prayers and blessings**

Lord, make us people who recognise, nurture and act towards a more sustainable world for the benefit of all who draw life from this planet. Raise up campaigners who will speak out for wisdom, restraint, and compassion. And teach us to partner you in protecting this precious world and the lives of our most vulnerable global neighbours. Amen

Dear Lord

Thank you for making this amazing world.

Thank you for making it so beautiful.

Thank you for loving every person you’ve made in the whole world.

Please help us to look after the world.

Please help us to look after each other.

Please stop climate change hurting people and all your creatures.

Please help us not to be greedy and trust you to give us enough.

Please help us to share what you’ve given us.

Thank you because today thousands of people around the world are praying these prayers.

Bless our Lament

Creator God,

Bless the tear we shed for the resources we have squandered.

Bless the sigh we breathe out for the atmosphere.

Bless the head we hang for the creatures lost and exploited.

Bless the hands we wring for the things we have broken and wasted.

Bless us as we lament.

Cradle us as we regret

Restore us as we start afresh. Amen

May God who established the dance of creation,

Who marvelled at the lilies of the field,

Who transforms chaos to order,

Lead us to transform our lives and the Church

To reflect God’s glory in creation. Amen

Appendix

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