

A Methodist Way of Life for December 2024 Flourish “We care for creation and all God's gifts”

Background thoughts

The universe is an expression of God’s loving, creative nature. From the very beginning of the Bible to the very end, we see that creation is at the heart of God’s story.

Throughout scripture we are told that creation and everything within it remains God’s.

Please, take time to read Deuteronomy Ch 10 verse 14 and Job Ch 12 verses 7 to 10.

By learning about God’s love for His creation and our place within it, we can learn to take care of His world.

“God is. God intends. God made. We messed. God saves. God makes. God makes. God makes”

Source: Reverend Mark Kimber.

What else does the Bible say

Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”

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

God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

Source: Genesis Chapter 1 verses 26 to 28

Our responsibility

Genesis 1:26-28 is an account of the creation of the first humans. The term rule (or have dominion over) might suggest that human beings are the most important of all God’s creations, and they have been given the job to rule over and subdue creation and can treat the environment as they wish. But this diminishes the importance of creation, making it seem to be important only in service to humanity, not for its own self.

If treated in this way it is clear that our environment will suffer, to the detriment of all.

Instead, we are meant to care for God’s creation; to make sure that it is looked after well and flourishes. This is clearly a much better attitude, and quite a common view today. It ensures that the world is taken better care of; that endangered species are protected and habitats preserved. It is the reason we grow bee-friendly flowers in our gardens, or campaign to protect the rainforest. That still leaves room for a view of creation as separate from us; that we are cultivating it as though it were an asset.

Key to this is our understanding of being made in the image of God. This is what sets us apart from the rest of creation. To be made in God’s image means that we represent God in our world; that we act towards the world in the same way God does. We were made for this.

We were made to reflect God in the world and we were made to reflect the world back to God. Remember, God called creation 'good' even before humans appeared on the scene.

New Creation

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here." Source 2 Corinthians Chapter 5 verse 17

If we are to be like God, we need to understand what God is like. The Bible relates how God brings restoration and healing to all of creation. God cares for, nurtures and loves. God doesn't give up on creation when things look dismal, but instead finds a way for re-creation. Therefore, our job is to look at how we can restore creation and help creation to flourish. This brings glory to God, and also helps us live restored lives.

Key themes

- The universe is an expression of God's loving, creative nature.
- We are part of the earth as well as the universe, lovingly woven from the same fabric.
- We are currently in a climate emergency requiring urgent action, but the good news is that by learning about God's love for creation and our place within it, we can learn to take care of the world we live in.

How should we respond?

The way people respond to this is deeply personal and depends on their current involvement, as well as their resources, time, gifts and talents. Everyone can start somewhere, even if it's as simple as switching from a bath to a shower, or how and where we do our weekly shopping. Start with small changes, and build up from there. This concern for our environment is a journey; and a "way of life" for Christians to care for God's world that He has given to us in trust.

For the fruit(s) of all creation, thanks be to God;
for the gifts of every nation, thanks be to God;
for the ploughing, sowing, reaping, silent growth while we are sleeping,
future needs in earth's safe-keeping, thanks be to God.

Source: Singing the Faith 124

Discussion starters

- How are we caring for creation?
- How might God be asking us to go further to be part of a flourishing creation?
- What is our biggest challenge in responding to the climate emergency?

Source: Abridged from "A Methodist Way Of Life".

www.methodist.org.uk/faith/a-methodist-way-of-life/ then search for "Flourish".

Prepared by

Rev Mark Kimber and John Cornish

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