

## **Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> October 2022**

All material © Heather Whyte unless stated otherwise.

God is love, let us adore God by sharing God's love.

God is ever present, around us and within us, we worship together in God.

### **Introduction to theme creation and one world**

We live in challenging times and life seems fragile. We are still emerging from a pandemic which paralysed normal life and whilst on the one hand united the world, also reminded us that resources are not fairly spread. There are still millions in the world who have not had access to a Covid vaccine.

The effects of Covid on businesses has been devastating and with the effects of Brexit removing hundreds of thousands of people from the workforce many businesses have been lost, and areas of work decimated by a lack of people to fill the jobs. There is a sense of not knowing what tomorrow may bring.

All this combined with the effects of the war in the Ukraine and subsequent sanctions adding to already rising fuel costs has created a crisis which is affecting everyone, but especially those already facing poverty and difficult decisions.

To this we add the very real threat to the life of our planet and in 2022 as we approach One World Week there has never been a greater need for the world to work together but how can we help to make that happen. It can all seem overwhelming and it feels as if the little I can do will make little difference to the big picture. However we are called to be stewards of the earth and that is about caring, caring for the planet and caring for all life on the planet. It is about challenging injustice and through our lives as people of faith and our actions as concerned inhabitants of this planet doing what we can, however little it may feel, to be a force for change by changing what we ourselves do.

So this morning we will explore a little of what it means to believe in One World.

**Reading**            Luke 18:1-8

### **Reflection 1**

At first glance we might assume that this parable is about prayer, that is what Luke tells us it is about, but maybe that is what Luke wanted it to be about rather than where Jesus hoped it would lead his listeners. Parables are about shock value, they are designed to surprise so where is the surprise in this parable?

Judges are rarely influenced by nagging, today they are protected against such actions but in the 1<sup>st</sup> century if a judge was good he would not give in to nagging and if they are not good judges then they would expect a bribe. Scripture often reminds us that widows had no place in society, no voice, because only men could speak in the important places, and people were urged to be good to widows.

The widow in this parable clearly has no male to speak on her behalf and she is poor, disadvantaged in society. The judge, we are told had respect neither for God or person, and we are to understand that he is a bad judge. The poor widow cannot offer a bribe and so her nagging has no effect. We, like Jesus' listeners would expect the judge to take no notice but then the parable tells us she suddenly she gets justice. I wonder what her opponent thought, expecting the judge to ignore her he suddenly finds himself having to recompense the widow.

This is a story about overturning the system, it is a story to remind us that the Kingdom is not like the world in which we live now. We pray for God's Kingdom to come, for things to change and this story reminds us that however powerless we feel we have a part to play in making that happen.

In One world, we are responsible for each other and accountable to each other. Good stewardship means we care about what happens to others, we care when people have no voice and the system is against them. We care because we are one and everything that happens to them, happens to us.

There is a Kenyan Proverb – Treat the earth well. It was not given to us by our parents but lent to us by our children. In what condition will we give it back?

Poem – The earth

If the earth were only a few feet in diameter,  
floating a few feet above a field somewhere,  
people would come from everywhere to marvel at it.

People would walk around it,  
marvelling at its big pools of water,  
its little pools and the water flowing between the pools.  
People would marvel at the bumps on it,  
and the holes in it,  
and they would marvel at the very thin layer of gas surrounding it,  
and the water suspended in the gas.

The people would marvel at the creatures  
walking around the surface of the ball,  
and at the creatures in the water.

The people would declare that it was sacred  
because it was the only one,  
and they would protect it so it would not be hurt.  
The ball would be the greatest wonder known,  
and people would come to behold it,  
to be healed, to gain knowledge, to know beauty  
and to wonder how it could be.

People would come to love it,  
and defend it with their lives,  
because they would know somehow that their lives,  
their own roundness, could be nothing without it.  
If the earth were only a few feet in diameter.

Reading            1 Timothy 6:17 -19

**Mediation** – Just a minute (from Christian Concern for One World)

It starts with a change  
So outwardly insignificant  
That no one would notice  
Except the person  
Behind you in the aisle.  
Just a moment  
When instead of seeing  
Rows of labels  
On a supermarket shelf  
You imagine the people  
Behind them,  
Tilling the earth,  
Sowing the seed,  
Gathering the crops.  
And you pause,

Wondering,  
What their names are,  
Where they live,  
What difference it will make  
If your hand picks up  
This box instead of that,  
Wondering: how do I  
Love these neighbours?  
Can I help change  
This child`s long journey for water,  
Her mother`s lack of healthcare,  
The prospect her father faces  
Of another year unable  
To feed his family well?  
Just a moment.  
And the person behind you,  
Her impatient baby  
Squirming in the trolley,  
May never realise  
That in that brief hesitation,  
A life hung in the balance.

The final sentence in our passage from Luke reads 'And yet, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?' Jesus knows that people can have good intentions but still do nothing. Are we as persistent as the widow? Do we nag the government enough, do we take every opportunity to register our concern about the crisis we face in the world? Do we, through our actions and our understanding of being stewards of the earth, demonstrate to others how small changes can and will make a difference?

Currently there is a petition called Warm This Winter which challenges the government in four areas – to provide energy support now, especially for the most vulnerable, to help upgrade homes by providing grants for insulation and better heating sources, to provide access to cheaper energy sources (the UK has some of the best renewable energy sources in Europe but we are not using them and the government has blocked future development), and finally by better use of renewables free us all from oil and gas use over which we have no control.

Every little change we make does make a difference but we also need to share with others our concerns and what we are doing. Every URC is urged to register with Eco Church and be making the small changes over which we do have control. As we do this we need to let the users of our building know what we are doing and why, and invite them to join in. A simple thing like committing not to use one time plastic drinks bottles and instead use a re-usable container and invite those using our building to join us. Advertising campaigns and petitions to challenge the government over its policies in respect of Climate Change.

We live on one planet, and in God we are one people connected through the Spirit with all creation, we need to work for a just and fair world for all people