

# Holy Trinity Hurstpierpoint Churchyard

## A September Armchair Prayer Walk

### 1. Community & interdependence

'O LORD, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.' (Psalm 104.24)

'Bless the Lord all you works of the Lord: sing his praise and exalt him for ever... Bless the Lord all birds of the air: bless the Lord you beasts and cattle; bless the Lord all people on earth: sing his praise and exalt him for ever.'  
(from *The Benedicte – A Song of Creation*)



Our church and its churchyard are located in the heart of the community. Generations of Hurstpierpoint people are buried here, have prayed here, have walked, sat and reflected here, enjoying the peace and beauty of God's creation, and remembering.

The signs of human community and of nature's community are intertwined – we are all God's creatures, part of the marvellous, interdependent web of life.



Lichens – so often found in churchyards – are a symbol of interdependence. Two entirely distinct creatures living together for mutual benefit. The fungi provide a protected micro-environment in which green algae or cyanobacteria can flourish, and provide the fungi with food (sugars) through photosynthesis.

Thank God for human community and for nature's community: for God's gift of the whole interdependent community of creation, the diverse and beautiful web of life of which we are part.

## **2. Human carelessness & exploitation**

'The earth dries up and withers, the world languishes and withers ... The earth is defiled by its people; they have disobeyed the laws ... and broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore a curse consumes the earth; its people must bear their guilt.' (Isaiah 24.4-6)

'There is no faithfulness, no love, no acknowledgment of God in the land. There is only cursing, lying and ... stealing ... they break all bounds ... Because of this the land dries up, and all who live in it waste away; the beasts of the field, the birds in the sky and the fish in the sea are swept away.' (Hosea 4.1-3)



Reflect on our lack of care for the world God has given us, on how we exploit and damage it, through our greed and heedlessness. Ask God's forgiveness and God's help to live differently.



### 3. Gardeners & stewards

'The Lord God took the human being and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.' (Genesis 2.15)

'The land itself must observe a sabbath to the Lord. For six years sow your fields, and for six years prune your vineyards and gather their crops. But in the seventh year the land is to have a year of sabbath rest ... Do not sow your fields or prune your vineyards ... Whatever the land yields during the sabbath year will be food for you – for yourself ... and the hired worker and temporary resident who live among you, as well as for your livestock and the wild animals in your land.' (Leviticus 25.1-7)

'O Lord my God, you are very great ...

You cause the grass to grow for the cattle, and plants for people to use, to bring forth food from the earth, and wine to gladden the human heart, oil to make the face shine, and bread to strengthen the human heart.' (Psalm 104.1,14-15)



God calls us to be good gardeners and stewards of planet Earth. To care well for our farm animals – and our honey bees. To tend our trees and crops. To manage our land so that wild nature may flourish as well as all humankind and the creatures and plants we have domesticated.

Reflect on how the churchyard has different areas, managed in different ways so that its biodiversity may flourish. Remember that just beyond the churchyard are our local farms. Do you grow food or have a garden? How might you garden to encourage wildlife to flourish?

Thank God for farmers and gardeners, for our churchyard bees and beekeepers, and for our churchyard team.

#### **4. The big picture – blessing upon blessing**

'O Lord my God, you are very great ...  
You make springs gush forth in the valleys; they flow between the hills, giving drink to every wild animal ...  
By the streams the birds of the air have their habitation; they sing among the branches. From your lofty abode you water the mountains; the earth is satisfied with the fruit of your work ...  
The trees of the Lord are watered abundantly ... In them the birds build their nests' (Psalm 104.1,11-17)

'For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land with flowing streams, with springs and underground waters welling up in valleys and hills, a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey, a land where you may eat bread without scarcity, where you will lack nothing' (Deuteronomy 8.7-9)

'Bless the Lord sun and moon: bless the Lord you stars of heaven;  
Bless the Lord all rain and dew ... bless the Lord all winds that blow:  
bless the Lord you fire and heat; bless the Lord scorching wind and bitter cold: sing his praise and exalt him for ever.  
Bless the Lord dews and falling snows: bless the Lord you nights and days; bless the Lord light and darkness ...  
Bless the Lord frost and cold: bless the Lord you ice and snow;  
Bless the Lord lightnings and clouds: sing his praise and exalt him for ever.  
O let the earth bless the Lord: bless the Lord you mountains and hills;  
bless the Lord all that grows in the ground: sing his praise and exalt him for ever.'  
( from *The Benedicte – A Song of Creation*)



'God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.'  
(Genesis 1.31)



From the churchyard we can look out, across fields and woods and hedgerows and streams, to the South Downs. Reflect on the cycles of nature. On how the chalk downland holds the rain as it falls, stores it and purifies it and offers it back to us and all living things. Reflect on how trees and other plants use sunlight to make food and oxygen for animals and for us, using the carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Reflect on the wonderful and complex ecosystems which support all life – and which offer us such beauty.

Praise and bless God for blessing upon blessing, for all the wonders of the Creation.

## **5. Wild creatures great & small**

'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 God saw that it was good ... '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.' (Genesis 1.24-25,30)







Reflect on the wild creatures, on their beauty and on how they bless us – especially those we often don't think about or really notice. They may be very small (like many insects), or shy or hidden in the earth (moles and worms). Many kinds of insects besides hive bees pollinate our plants – including wild bees and many kinds of flies. Insects and other “creeping things” help to break down organic matter and replenish the fertility of the soil.

Reflect on the trees and other plants, producing fruit in abundance to feed these wild creatures.

Thank God for all wild creatures great and small, and for nature's fruitfulness.

## 6. Welcome

'But ask the animals, and they will teach you; the birds of the air, and they will tell you; ask the plants of the earth, and they will teach you ... Who among all these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this? In his hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of every human being.' (Job 12.7-10)

In the morning, while it was still very dark, Jesus got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. (Mark 1.35)

Jesus said: 'Look at the birds of the air ... Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow ...' (Matthew 6.25-34)



We are continuing to work to make our church a place of welcome, where people may meet with God and know God's love and blessing. How can we make our churchyard more welcoming to our community and to a rich diversity of wild creatures?

Ask God to show us how to achieve the right balance – and how to make our churchyard a place which speaks even more of God's love and peace.

God of Creation, who loves all you have made,  
Open the eyes of your people,  
That your love might be reflected  
in our care for the planet, our common home.  
Through Jesus Christ,  
who walked this earth and calls us by name.  
Amen.

