

Key Concept/Message

In this instalment of Heart for the Earth, we move to the sixth day of creation described within Genesis One. Here, the narrative details God's creation of animals. Before reflecting on how we can show a heart for the Earth through our care and championing of animals in the next collective worship plan, this plan focuses on the 'awesomeness' of animals.

Opportunities are provided for the school community to marvel at these wonderful creatures which are part of a rich tapestry of life on earth. It is an appreciation and value of all life on the planet which animate action for a flourishing Earth.

Bible Story

Genesis 1 (particularly verses 24-25)

24 And God said, "Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground, and the wild animals, each according to its kind". And it was so. 25 God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

(New International Version)



Gather

Follow the school's normal gathering routines, using words of liturgy which are familiar to students and adults

or

Light a candle and offer the following prayer: 'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you'. Response: and also with you. (To support pupil understanding of the Christian belief in God as Trinity here, why not light a single candle which has three wicks, lighting them in turn as each 'person' is acknowledged?)

Engage

Recap the 'community of creation' theology with the school community using the PowerPoint slides (see footnotes for an example explication in a previous plan)[1]. Remind them that we have previously used this worldview to help us think about how we can show a heart for the Earth through:

- 'our wise use of electricity ('Day 1') and water ('Day 2')
- 'supporting flourishing eco-systems ('Day 3')
- 'reducing our carbon footprint ('Day 4') and
- 'caring for birdlife ('Day 5')

Today/this week, we will use this 'community of creation' view to think more deeply about animals.

In the creation narrative of Genesis 1[2], God follows the creation of light, water, plant-life, celestial bodies (the sun, moon and stars), birdlife and water to create animals on the sixth day:

[1] <http://tinyurl.com/y3wrpfxr>

[2] *You may wish to reiterate that there are many views about Genesis 1 – some think it is literal truth, some think it is a symbolic poem which describes what God and creation are like, some have other views about this narrative.*

24 And God said, "Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground, and the wild animals, each according to its kind". And it was so. 25 God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. (New International Version)

The big story of the bible begins with God creating the earth and populating it with an extraordinary diversity of life. And God is *delighted* with all creatures. Nature is a rich tapestry of different species, each with their own uniqueness.

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We share the earth with an enormous diversity of animals. Exactly how many species there are is unknown. Around 2.16 million species have been categorised by humans to date; some scientists think there are a further six million which remain undiscovered.[3] In 2023 alone, 619 new species of wasps were discovered, as well as a new species of spider (the giant crab spider), frog (*Hyloscirtus Tolkieni* – yes, after J.R.R Tolkien!) and snake (the DiCaprio snail-eating snake).[4]

All animals are amazing. Many of us have our favourite animals. I wonder what some of your favourite animals are?

Across the world, human's joy in animals is seen through the fact that many choose to have pets. A survey in 2024 in Britain identified 'the twenty most popular pets in the UK'.[5] Here they are on the screen, from 20th to 1st. (You could even give students time to consider what might be in the top 10 or 20 via a pair-share discussion). The top 20 and statistics can be found in the slide notes.

[3] <https://ourworldindata.org/how-many-species-are-there>

[4] <https://www.euronews.com/green/2023/12/30/dalek-wasps-lightbulb-anemones-and-a-giant-penguin-5-new-species-discovered-in-2023>

[5] <https://www.scotsman.com/lifestyle/family-and-parenting/top-british-pets-cats-dogs-2024-most-popular-fish-ferrets-3327012>

Respond

Watch a few minutes of this video of animals around the world:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pb-j3svRQLI> (on PowerPoint). Pose the following reflective questions for students to consider as they watch:

I wonder...

...is there anything that delights you about animals?

...if you can think of an encounter with an animal that has made you go, 'wow'.

Then, offer a time of silence. I wonder what watching this video made you think about? I wonder how it made you feel? Take some time in silence to ponder these questions.

After some time in silence, invite those who would like to join in with this prayer.

Dear God,

We thank you for all creatures which you have created

Help us to recognise how amazing they are

And to remember that we share the planet with them

Amen

Send

I wonder what animals you might see this week? I wonder how you might *delight* in animals?