

Key Concept/Message

This first act of collective worship in the Heart for the Earth resources introduces the key ideas, questions and themes which subsequent acts of worship over the next two years constellate around. The creation narrative of Genesis chapter one is explored with reference to two differing interpretations: are humans created as 'special' and above creation, or as part of an equal community of all creation?[1] Arguably, the former interpretation has played a part in animating and justifying human actions which have had a negative impact on the climate and wider environment. Would the latter view be a better worldview – a better theology – moving forward?

This act of collective worship introduces the basic thrust of the Heart for the Earth resources, asking us each to ponder: how can we show a heart for the earth in our own lives? Any why is it important to?

Bible Story

Genesis 1, particularly Genesis 1:26

God spoke: "Let us make human beings in our image, make them reflecting our nature so they can be responsible for the fish in the sea, the birds in the air, the cattle, and, yes, Earth itself, and every animal that moves on the face of Earth." (The Message version)



[1] See 'theological underpinning' section of Heart for the Earth overview (pages 4-5) for further information

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.*



Show the following image. Ask the school community to reflect individually and/or discuss with others:

- I wonder what you think this image might be about?
- What does it make you think of? How does it make you feel?

Invite the school community to share some views.

Engage

Explain that we will be thinking about having a 'Heart for the Earth' in our worship today – thinking deeply about why this is important and how we can care for the world in our own individual lives and within the groups and communities we are a part. To help us think about this, we will explore the creation narrative found in the first book of the Bible – Genesis 1 (acknowledge here 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).

Allow the school community to encounter Genesis 1-2:4:

- <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+1-2&version=MSG>

Invite the school community to reflect on this creation narrative (either individually or as think, pair, share) – you may wish to pose these questions prior to the telling of Genesis 1.

I wonder what you think the main messages people take from this narrative are?

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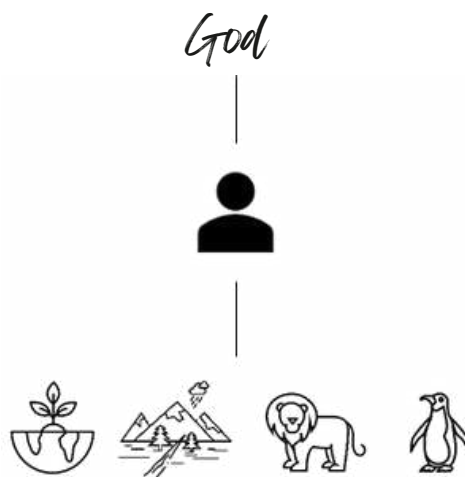
Invite a few responses, and then explain that for thousands of years the creation narrative of Genesis 1 has been read by millions of people. Some of the main messages taken are...

- ...that the world has been created by God. God chose to create plants, animals, humans, birdlife, sealife, land and sky.
- ...and this creation is good! The world is full of so much beauty, amazing life and places. *What parts of the world do you really love which make you go 'wow'?*

There is one part of this story, however, in which different Christians have different views on. What should the relationship be between humans and the rest of creation? The verse in question is Genesis 1:26:

God spoke: "Let us make human beings in our image, make them reflecting our nature so they can be responsible for the fish in the sea, the birds in the air, the cattle, and, yes, Earth itself, and every animal that moves on the face of Earth." (The Message version)

One view is this:



In this view, humans are set above and apart from the rest of non-human creation. This view is called 'dominion'. Humans were created last as they are the most special part of creation – more special than plants, animals, land and sea.

Another view is that the wider Bible describes humans as living as part of a community with the rest of creation. In this view, all parts of creation are connected and equally valued. Let's call this the 'community of creation' view.



So why is this important? These views are important to think about in the light of climate change.

Ask what climate change is and some of the impacts of climate change from the school community.

As humans, the ways in which we see the world shape how we act towards it. In the past and even today, many people use the 'dominion' idea to exploit the resources of the earth for their own gain. This is like being an 'earth tourist' – using the resources of the earth to have a good time, in a way which damages the earth in their pursuit of enjoyment.

Many Christians believe that the 'community of creation' view is better. This view helps humans act more like 'earth pilgrims' – treating the planet and life on it as sacred, special, to be treasured. In this view, showing a heart for the earth is a form of worship to God who created all things. Walking more lightly on this planet should not be seen as an 'add on' or optional extra, but something we humans are called to do.

Which view do you think is better for responding to climate change and showing a heart for the earth?

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Explain that, through the Heart for the Earth resources, we will think deeply about how we can show a heart for the earth over the coming months. Pupils across the Diocese of St Albans were asked about their views about showing a heart for the earth:

<https://youtu.be/WYWle4sfGvU>

Respond

Show the two quotes on the PowerPoint:

- 'To be human is to care for creation' (Anthony G. Reddie)
- 'Know that you are incredibly lucky to be alive at a time when you can make a transformative difference to the future of all life on Earth. You are not powerless. Your every action is suffused with meaning and you are part of the greatest chapter of human achievement in history' (Christiana Figueres)

Before a prayer is offered, ponder individually for one minute:

- Do you think it is important to show a heart for the earth? Why?
- How might you show a heart for the earth in your thoughts and actions?

A prayer is offered below. Invite the school community to make it their own, should they wish to, by saying 'amen' at the end. You may also invite pupils to make a heart with their index fingers and thumbs whilst they pray or reflect.



Dear God,

Thank you for creating the world and everything in it

Forgive us for those times in which we have put ourselves before creation

Help us to show a heart for the earth in our thoughts and actions this week

Amen

Send

Show the image used in the 'gather' section again.

Explain that we will continue thinking about these themes.

Invite the school community to ponder how they can show a heart for the earth in their thoughts and actions this week.

