

**A BIBLE WORD PRAISE CELEBRATION
HARVEST PROVIDENCE**

The service is a Harvest celebration or for thanksgiving for the integrity of God's creation. The minister/pastor/priest/worship leader does the narration of each reading as set out, the readings are best done by representatives of the congregation. Songs/Hymns should be chosen appropriately so as not to clash with other services, and also to fit with the readings they follow after. The service can be used with contemporary music/band group or traditional choir-based format, with both Contemporary and Traditional Service Orders provided at the end. God's people need to hear our relationship with the Bible in worship at Harvest and remembering the Integrity of Creation, or lose faith balance. Items for soloists, music/band group/choirs should number 2 to 4 of the song/hymn items for good quality gifted ministry input. Any non-expanded good Bible version can be used for the readings. It is recommended that readers from Childrens' Church be included for all ages ministry.

The service begins with the Bible being processed into the Church, the welcome given, and the call to worship from Psalm 19 (or like psalm) being given.

Psalm 19 - A psalm of David.

**The heavens declare the glory of God;
The skies proclaim the work of his hands.
Day after day they pour forth speech;
Night after night they display their knowledge
There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard.
Their voice goes out into all the earth,
Their words to the ends of the world.**

Introduction

The majestic order of the heavens and the earth has always moved people very deeply. Stand at 'God's window' in Mpumalanga, find harmony of land and seascape easing your soul in the Garden Route, on a Sutherland Karoo night look up at the heavens, or watch the cycle of nature in the wildlife reserves of Africa, and feel the sense of God's presence. We have come so far in understanding the universe, yet people used to worship sun, moon, thunder and lightning and name false gods after them. Even today people still show confused obsequiousness to spirits of animals, rivers and mountains; astrology is a billion dollar industry of folly among people without understanding of the nature of stars and space; people confusing the created for the Creator. We will hear God's revelation in the words of scripture, words that show no such confusion between the one God who is Spirit and the works of his hand, words that leave us in no doubt - God created in beauty and natural law with a plan of great love to unfold...

Song/s/Hymn:

Opening Prayer

Let us pray:

Almighty God, creator of the physical universe and the spiritual realm,
give us grace to see beyond the confusion of worshipping that which is created.

We celebrate your foreseeing protection and care of your creatures,
which the order of creation and good harmony with nature shows us.
We also rejoice to hear the words of how you revealed that the one God
is a personal God in relationship with humans.

From the Bible we know the one God who is Spirit, who in providence
and control of history sets the stage for our lives, for our relationship with you.

Eternal God, we are in your holy presence;
The Bible also talks of the curse in creation, cycles of confusion and pain,
poverty and disease, sin and death allow humans to inflict evil,
and all creatures inflict violence against fellow creatures and earth.
In the fullness of time your Son Jesus Christ came to us in the flesh,
creation seemed to take note, and so too we acknowledge our sins
and the sins of the whole world from which your Son came to redeem us
and redeem creation from the curse.

We pray in his name for your gracious forgiveness.
We seek the victory of his death and resurrection in triumph
over the brokenness and curse in creation and us,
Help us take up our salvation in the renewal of our relationship with you,
One God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen

Let us think of the creation we inhabit by God's grace...

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness and called the light 'day' and the darkness 'night'. And there was evening and there was morning - the first day.

And God separated the heavens from the earth, and space from matter, and called the space 'sky'. And there was evening and morning - the second day.

And God gathered the waters of the earth in their place to let the dry ground appear; God called the dry ground 'land' and the waters 'seas'. He let the land produce vegetation, seed-bearing and fruit bearing plants and trees. And God saw that it was good. There was evening and morning - the third day.

And God let the lights of the stars, and the two great lights, the sun and moon for day and night, appear in space marking day from night and giving light on earth. There was evening and morning - the fourth day.

And God let the water and sky teem with living creatures - birds, sea creatures great and small. God saw it was good, he blessed them, they were fruitful and multiplied. There was evening and morning, the fifth day.

And God let the land produce living creatures - livestock, crawling creatures, wild animals. And God saw that it was good. *(Adapted from Genesis 1.1-25)*

On the sixth day of Genesis, God also created humankind for the special role of stewardship over creation:

Then God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; 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 of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground." Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be

yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground - everything that has the breath of life in it - I give every green plant for food.” God saw all that he had made in the six days of creation, and it was very good. And there was morning and evening, the sixth day. On the seventh day God rested from all the work of creating he had done; and God blessed the seventh day and made it holy. *(Adapted from Genesis 1.27-2.3)*

Song/s/Hymn:

The universe was created good, filled with God’s foreseeing care and protection for his creatures. Yet Genesis 3 tells that Eden was ‘spoiled’ by the first homo sapiens; today we encounter a ‘survivalist curse’ in the universe:

God said to Adam “Because you listened to your wife, you and your wife listened to a ‘serpent of the temptation to be demigods’, and ate from the tree about which I commanded you ‘You must not eat of it,’ “Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. it will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you will return. *(Adapted from Genesis 3.17-19)*

Because of sin and the 'survivalist' curse, God needed to plan a land flowing with milk and honey for the people, so that out of them would come the one to bring his plan of restoration to fulfillment. As long as you live, you and your descendants are to honor the LORD your God and obey all his laws that I am giving you, so that you may live in that land a long time. Listen to them, people of Israel, and obey them! Then all will go well with you, and you will become a mighty nation and live in a land flowing with milk and honey, just as the LORD, the God of our ancestors, has promised. "Hear O Israel! The LORD our God is one Lord. Love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.”

(Adapted from Deut 6.2-5)

Let us hear from the prophet Isaiah of one to come who would redeem humankind and renew creation from the curse and its pain:

A shoot will come up from the roots and stump of Jesse and bear fruit. The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him - the spirit of wisdom and understanding, counsel and power, knowledge and the fear of the Lord - and he will delight in the fear of the Lord. He will not judge by seeing this world’s standards, but with God’s righteous justice for the poor and needy; his word will slay the wicked. The wolf will lie down with the lamb, the leopard with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. The cow will feed the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The infant will play near the hole of the cobra, and the young child put his hand into the viper’s nest. On all my holy mountain, they will neither harm nor destroy, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. *(Adapted from Isaiah 11.1-9)*

Song/s/Hymn:

Harvest/Thanksgiving Offering Let us worship God with our offerings.

The offerings are brought forward by the office-bearers, who remain standing before the table for the offering and thanksgiving prayer.

Jesus spoke of his own life as the seed which must fall into the ground and die so that it can produce many seeds. He knew how in his death our old life would also die by faith, and in his resurrection the Holy Spirit would be the seed, the spark of our new lives. So Jesus told the Parable of the Sower, that God has passed on the beginning of spiritual development in us to multiply and overflow to others, so we share in the working of God's redemption from the curse of sin in creation. In God's foreseeing care and protection, God's plan has been sown and bears fruit...

Jesus said: "Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. Some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up; so some hear but Satan takes the Word away. Some fell on rocky places, without much soil, springing up quickly, but when the sun came up, the plants were scorched because they had no root; so some hear but have shallow roots, so last a short time till they fall away at trouble or persecution. Some seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants so they could not bear grain; so some hear but life's worries and the deceit of wealth and other things choke the Word from fruitfulness. Other seed fell on good soil, came up, grew and produced - thirty, sixty, even a hundred fold; so others hear the Word, accept it and produce a multiplied crop."
(Adapted from Mark 4.1-9, 13-20)

In the Father's foreseeing care and protection, Jesus' death, resurrection and sending of the Holy Spirit was the plan to deal with the curse in us and creation. Saul persecuted those who first followed Jesus; then he met the resurrected Jesus, and was renewed as Paul. Thinking of the meaning of Jesus' resurrection through the death that all creation experiences, he wrote:

Jesus is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

(Adapted from Col 1.15-23)

Jesus' death and resurrection has allowed God to adopt us as his children by the Holy Spirit, and to work the liberation of all creation in the process.

The creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration... by the will of the one who subjected it, in the hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. ...Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as children, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. ...And the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.

(Adapted from Rom 8.18-27)

Song/s/Hymn:

The apostle John was given a glorious vision of the last day. Creation is restored, and the hope of God's children - the final resurrection delivered by God at the end of time – this is nourished by the river of the water of life, the Holy Spirit. Revelation 22.1-6:

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign forever and ever. The angel said to me "These words are trustworthy and true. The Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent his angel to show his servants the things that must soon take place."
(Rev 22.1-6)

Ministry Prayer: Let us pray:

O God our heavenly Father,
you created in foreseeing care and protection, and anticipated the folly of our sin.
Creation's laws show us your hand, your Word by the prophets tells us your plan.
In Jesus' death you have redeemed us and creation from the curse;
in Jesus' resurrection you completed creation, showing life beyond this death.

It is right, it is our duty and our joy at all times and in all places,
to give you thanks and praise.

You are our Holy Father, our Almighty and everlasting God.
You created the heavens and the earth and all that is in them.

You made man in your own image,
You opened the tomb of Jesus, and gave the new life of his resurrection
and of our salvation which has come, this good news of the everlasting gospel.

[Traditional Responsive prayer if needed

So with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven
we worship you and declare the greatness of your glory;
we praise you now and forever saying:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord; God of power and might;
Heaven and earth are full of your glory;
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

The Lord's Prayer: Let us say the Lord's prayer together....]

On the last day, when Jesus shall come again in glorious majesty
to judge the living and the dead, we shall rise to life everlasting,
life spoken of as in the new creation through him who was dead and is alive forever.
Give to us belief beyond doubt and as we joyfully receive him as our redeemer,
give us sure confidence to behold him when he shall come to be our judge.
He is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God now and forever. Amen

Closing Message/Narration

Jesus' resurrection marks the first change in the otherwise unbreakable fact of death in creation. God's purpose to offer him for us also let God complete the process of letting death lose its sting. Jesus' death paid the price for sin, his resurrection defeated death with everlasting life, and the Holy Spirit is the deposit of our eternal inheritance.

Final Song/Hymn:

Blessing and Blessing Song:

A BIBLE WORD PRAISE CELEBRATION
HARVEST PROVIDENCE - CONTEMPORARY ORDER:
*(Songs are suggestions only. For user friendliness with children,
note grouping of readings and songs into blocks.*
Recommendations: Band/Music Group sings in place of two or more songs)

Entrance of the Word
Welcome and Notices
Call to Worship

Service Introduction

Opening Song/s **All things bright and beautiful**
 Morning has broken

Opening Prayer

Reading 1: Genesis 1.1-25 - God created the Universe and Life

Reading 2: Genesis 1.27-2.3 - God created humankind in favour

Song Group: ***Look at the world***

Songs: **Ah Lord God, Thou hast made**
 Come, now is the time

Reading 3: Genesis 3.17-19 - Humans and the survival curse

Reading 4: Deuteronomy 6.2-5 - Honour and love the Lord your God

Reading 5: Isaiah 11.1-9 - God promised the Lord of victory

Songs: **The Lord has given a land of good things**
 Give thanks with a grateful heart

Offering: **Offering Song**

Reading 6: Mark 4.1-9, 13-20 - The Parable of the Sower

Reading 7: Colossians 1.15-23 - The Firstborn over all Creation

Reading 8: Romans 8.18-27 - The Creation waits for its Lord

Song/s: **My Jesus, My Saviour (Shout to the Lord)**
 Blessed be Your Name

Song Group: ***It only takes a spark (Alt. Lord I come to You.)***

Reading 9: Rev 22.1-6 - The River of the Spirit of Life

Ministry Prayer

Closing Message

Closing Song **Great is Thy faithfulness**

Blessing and **Blessing Song**

A BIBLE WORD PRAISE CELEBRATION
HARVEST PROVIDENCE
Traditional Order

Entrance of the Word
Welcome and Notices
Call to Worship

Service Introduction

Opening Hymn: **All people that on earth do dwell**
Opening Prayer

Reading 1: Genesis 1.1-25 - God created the Universe and Life

Reading 2: Genesis 1.27-2.3 - God created humankind in favour

Hymn: **All things bright and beautiful**

Reading 3: Genesis 3.17-19 - Humans and the survival curse

Reading 4: Deuteronomy 6.2-5 - Honour and love the Lord your God

Reading 5: Isaiah 11.1-9 - God promised the Lord of victory

Choir: **(Choir performs selected item)**

Hymn: **We plough the fields and scatter**

Offering: **Offering Song**

Reading 6: Mark 4.1-9, 13-20 - The Parable of the Sower

Reading 7: Colossians 1.15-23 - The Firstborn over all Creation

Reading 8: Romans 8.18-27 - The Creation waits for its Lord

Hymn: **All creatures of our God and King**

Reading 9: Rev 22.1-6 - The River of the Spirit of Life

Choir: **(Choir performs selected item)**

Ministry Prayer

Closing Message/Narration

Closing Hymn **Great is Thy faithfulness**

Blessing and **Blessing Song**