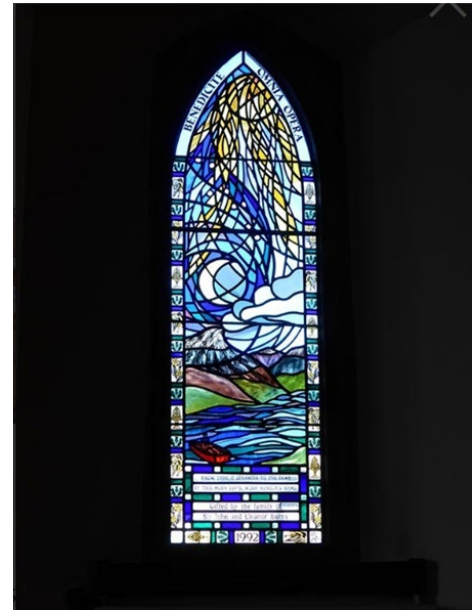


Ecotheology and Ecolistening:
listening, composing, singing,
worshipping.

An all-ages, multidisciplinary
resource pack connecting
environmental studies, music, and
religious and moral education.

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University of St Andrews Laidlaw Music Centre
Dunblane and St Andrews May 2026*



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1. Overview

This project aimed to explore how listening and making music can build stronger affective relationships towards the environments in which we live and share with other creatures. It uses interdisciplinary approaches within a range of RME (religious and moral education) contexts appropriate to different ages of people. The project actively sought out opportunities for intergenerational listening encounters across variant musical, and belief, communities and individual preferences.

The hypothesis was that in a contemporary Scottish context, environmental ethics might present a common ground upon which the connections between Christian religious tradition and the natural world might be explored, while respecting considerable diversity of belief systems and practices. This is particularly sensitive in schools work, where children (and their parents) are brought into contact with faith practices which may be very different from their home beliefs and practices. In the first school workshop we ran, a pupil put up their hand and asked warily, “Isn’t it offensive to read the Bible ‘at’ people?” Indeed, it is, we said. However, within Scottish education contexts, it is also good to understand what different people believe, and to have a chance to think whether people of different beliefs can nevertheless share common values, in this case, respect for our shared environment.

Finding common ground for value sharing in RME is normal in Scottish classroom music. The sector leader here is currently Fischy Music, an Edinburgh based charity whose ‘common ground’ is mental health and wellbeing.¹ Fischy provide high quality resources which can be delivered either in religious and non-faith contexts, and have thought carefully about using music sensitively: as their website says, “we help children celebrate the good times and build resilience in the tough times”.

The focus on finding a ‘common ground’ in environmental ethics mirrors and extends Fischy’s model, inviting more work in this specific area of shared values. Public awareness of very real environmental challenges is impacting voting patterns, particularly in younger people.² While tensions between economic anxiety and climate action anxiety exist, some research has suggested that even those supporting political

¹ See <https://fischy.com/> accessed 26 May 2026.

² See e.g. ‘Scottish voters want government to reflect their values, new polling analysis by IPPR Scotland find’, press release from IPPR, 20 May 2026, <https://www.ippr.org/media-office/scottish-voters-want-government-to-reflect-their-values-new-polling-analysis-by-ippr-scotland-finds>, accessed 26 May 2026

parties to the right of centre are also concerned about the environment.³ Many schools in Scotland subscribe to the Eco-Schools network, which supports the embedding of sustainable values within the Scottish curriculum.⁴ As long ago as 2012, the Scottish government's Learning for Sustainability policy, which in 2016 became explicitly aligned with the UN sustainable development goals, connected the national curriculum with environmental care.⁵ For most children in full-time education, environmental sustainability is an easily recognisable part of the curriculum, and building RME and music resources to connect with that core feels like an organic response to contemporary classroom culture.

Finding such common ground when connecting music and RME is important because in a diverse classroom environment, singing words which are not aligned with your own beliefs feels coercive and is potentially even more offensive than being 'read at'. With our schools' work, we therefore designed creative ways of listening and sharing natural sounds, allowing pupils to understand that people of faith may understand these to be evidence of a Creator, but allowing pupils also simply to enjoy the experience of embodied sounds and sound-making arising from environmental observation.

With the adult workshops, we were able to assume that attendees shared a common belief framework and were willing to sing: the adverts for the adult workshops explicitly aligned workshop activities with active Christian faith contexts. The challenges for the adults was to understand and engage with soundscape composition as a kind of 'music making' which might be productive in worship, and to appreciate the children's creativity in that context.

While some traditions of Christian scripture reading have concentrated on the brokenness of the world, the project focussed on areas of Christian teaching that celebrate diverse forms of created life (in scientific terms, biodiversity), aiming to encourage attitudes of active listening and positive thoughts towards the complex interaction of forces that support life in our world. The events included:

- Dunblane, Perthshire: four 90-minute primary schools workshops delivered to c80 children average age 10, hosted by St Mary's Scottish Episcopal Church;
- Dunblane, Perthshire: an all-ages free 1-hour singing workshop, followed (optionally) by a worship service, linked to a community Eco-festival;
- St Andrews: a low-cost adult, full-day workshop marketed in national church music networks for general public, church affiliated people, particularly but not

³ See e.g. 'Poll: majority of Scots considering voting Reform back climate action', from the *Energy & Climate Intelligence Unit*, 13 April 2026 <https://eciu.net/media/press-releases/poll-majority-of-scots-considering-voting-reform-back-climate-action> accessed 26 May 2026.

⁴ See <https://www.keepsotlandbeautiful.org/eco-schools/>

⁵ See Peter Higgins, 'Nature's Classroom: Tackling the climate and nature crises through Scottish schools', The Royal Society of Edinburgh, 28 August 2024, <https://rse.org.uk/resource/natures-classroom-tackling-the-climate-and-nature-crises-through-scottish-schools/> accessed 26 May 2026.

exclusively reaching church musicians, followed by a public worship service, co-hosted by the University of St Andrews Laidlaw Music Centre (workshop) and St Andrew's Scottish Episcopal Church (worship).

The events took place in environments with a pattern of prior engagement with these diverse kinds of events, which helped both in attracting in participants and also in making the context feel more familiar to those who took part. Participant surveys for each event asked what participants understand about their learning, and for feedback on what worked well or otherwise.

St Mary's Scottish Episcopal Church, Dunblane, is situated at the Fourways Roundabout on the edge of the old town centre, and has quite extensive gardens, hall facilities and an adjacent primary school with a church affiliation. The primary school affiliation is unusual in the Scottish context outside of the Catholic school provision created by the Education Scotland (1918) Act. In addition to this, St Mary's has over several years welcomed local non-denominational primary school classes for site visits as part of RME provision and also has encouraged participation in environmental issues more generally by hosting, since 2022, an annual community Eco-festival.⁶

The University of St Andrews has run an MLitt in Sacred Music since 2019/20, and since 2023 has hosted an annual public Study and Sing workshop day and service, in partnership with national church music organisation networks (in recent years, Church Music Scotland, the Royal School of Music, the Royal College of Organists and Scottish Federation of Organists). These public engagement events encourage members of the public to explore different sacred music repertoire contexts combining accessible adult learning material drawing on academic research with practical music-making experiences.

Acknowledgements

The Dunblane events were made possible by the inspirational community leadership of Revd Canon Nerys Brown of St Mary's SEC, whose community knowledge and engagement helped to bring all the right people into the spaces at the right time. Revd Brown also provided public-facing communication aids for the Saturday Eco-fest day, and led with music choices which she knew would connect with local people: these were accessible, contemporary, unison songs with a Scottish folk music feel. This kind of project can only work with a full partnership between the local lead and the incomer, and Nerys was a simply wonderful partner.

I am also grateful to my colleagues Ellen Thomson and Dan Kempself, of StAMP (St Andrews Music Partnership), both of whom have had a lot of experience leading

⁶ <https://ecofestdunblane.com/> accessed 18 May 2026.

composition workshops with primary school children, and who very ably facilitated group work in the Dunblane schools' workshops.

For the St Andrews workshop, I am grateful for the support of the STARIS (St Andrews Research Internship Scheme) which provided funds for undergraduate students Charis Yip, Kirstin Spence and Archie Moore to work on aspects of the St Andrews day; to Luis Meseguer Mira, (MLitt Sacred Music. University of St Andrews, 2025) who agreed to compose a new, accessible piece for the St Andrews event; to Dr Michael Lyons (School of Divinity, University of St Andrews), whose knowledge of Old Testament Hebrew helped us to think about the challenges in applying ancient texts to modern times; to Rev Katrin Bosse, who thoughtfully tied many themes together in a final homily at the end of the St Andrews day; and to Revd Canon Professor Trevor Hart for hosting at St Andrew's SEC church.

2. Schools Workshop: listen, draw, compose

The school workshops involved 4 classes of P6 (average age 10) pupils in 2 schools, Dunblane and Newton Primary Schools. Another small school (St Mary's Primary) sent 3 pupils from a composite class who merged with another school for the first (listening) part of the workshop, but who did not stay to take part in the composition exercise and therefore did not complete any feedback surveys.

Schools were sent session plans in advance, and after the event, were sent both the finished soundscape combining all the compositions along with an information sheet with some suggested further listening exercises.

Learning review surveys were completed in the classroom immediately after the workshops under the supervision of class teachers, and before pupils had heard the final combined recording. Questions were designed to provide a light-touch consolidation of learning, hoping this would be useful for the classroom experience.

45 anonymous surveys were returned, with parental consent provided to the schools to allow these to be shared with the researcher.

The workshop had 6 activities:

- a) **Gathering in the church and looking:** St Mary's church has two stained-glass windows depicting different natural environments in Scotland and Africa; discussing how the environments pictured might make noises, and the unique sounds of different natural environments; discussing how we might use our senses to pay attention to the environment. Whole class.
- b) **Listening and drawing sound maps:** small groups positioned at different outside listening stations, with different sonic affordances; using charcoal and recycled paper to make 'sound maps' of those sounds (translating the feel, volume, quality of sounds into different shapes). Some pupils also used words to identify sounds, but this was not a core requirement. Individually within small groups.
- c) **Gathering again in the church and reviewing the sound maps:** pupils explaining / remembering what they had heard outside, and discussing whether these sounds were: of human origin (anthropogenic); elemental sounds; sounds from other living creatures e.g. birds. This allowed some reflection on how comparatively noisy human-generated noise is. Beginning to explore using our bodies to recreate these remembered sounds. Whole class.
- d) **Listening to a short story from the Bible** as an example of 'what happens within a church', from the *Book of Daniel* about 3 youths who refuse to consent to worshipping a gold statue of a king; their being punished for this and surviving a potential death sentence; and their responding by singing a song to celebrate being alive, that talks about hearing all kinds of life-affirming noises. Within a

faith context this would be evidence of a Creator at work. This was the most sensitive part of the workshop to manage and was presented as a story that demonstrates the importance of the senses to being alive and the life-affirming properties of the natural world, relevant to the eco-listening activities. The story also shows sounds being noticed from different sources and environments, as well as suggesting limits to human hubris. Whole class.

- e) **Making a short composition** in small groups using bodies and voices to mimic natural sounds based on these categories: life in water, elemental sounds (storms), plant life, animal life, human life. These connect both with the songs in the Bible and with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (Life in Water, Life on Land, and Climate Action).⁷ We did not make an explicit link with the SDGs within the workshop, but teachers might want to follow up on that. One school (Newton Primary) had already been doing project work on water and had a display on this topic in the Eco-fest hall at the weekend. Small groups.
- f) **Gathering the class and performing** these short 1-minute compositions in the sequence of psalm 148, to each other. This involved listening and turn-taking as well as making sounds. Whole class.

Observations of activities suggested the following points:

- Outdoor listening needs to be carefully moderated by adult group leaders, e.g. pointing to sound sources, and encouraging attention to what might be said about direction, volume, quality of sound, pitch contours, etc. Some group leaders will benefit from advance priming on what to “listen out for”.
- Not all noises are nice to listen to. This should be discussed after the exercise, particularly those in environments which are dominated by traffic, considering e.g. how human generated sounds might impact creatures such as birds who rely on sound to communicate, or how noisy environments affect our human capacity to hear quieter creatures such as bees.
- We had at least one child with a hearing impairment, who still managed to do the drawing and take part in sound-making – particularly as their group sound making allowed moving in rhythm. Rhythm in music also has a kinetic response component which can build on visual entrainment and floor vibration. For this child, the outside listening exercise involved other sensory input (mainly sight but potentially also smell and touch). We did not have any advance information about this need, but in a normal classroom setting, a class teacher will be better informed to mobilise different sensory abilities in differently abled children.
- We had some children who were uncomfortable making sounds in front of their peers, although performing in groups seemed to make this easier for most. Self-consciousness may affect all music classes, particularly those using the

⁷ See <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

body/voice to make sounds. Animal sounds were particularly challenging for some: perhaps this has an association with early-stage learning which for P6 might feel difficult. This did work well in the final audio, but might need a bit more discussion about e.g. how nature films also need to 'recreate' sounds using foley techniques and potentially allowing recorded sounds or instruments to be used alongside voices and bodies.

The children completed surveys on returning to their school, and the following pages summarise their responses.

The sound composition made by the children may be listened to here:

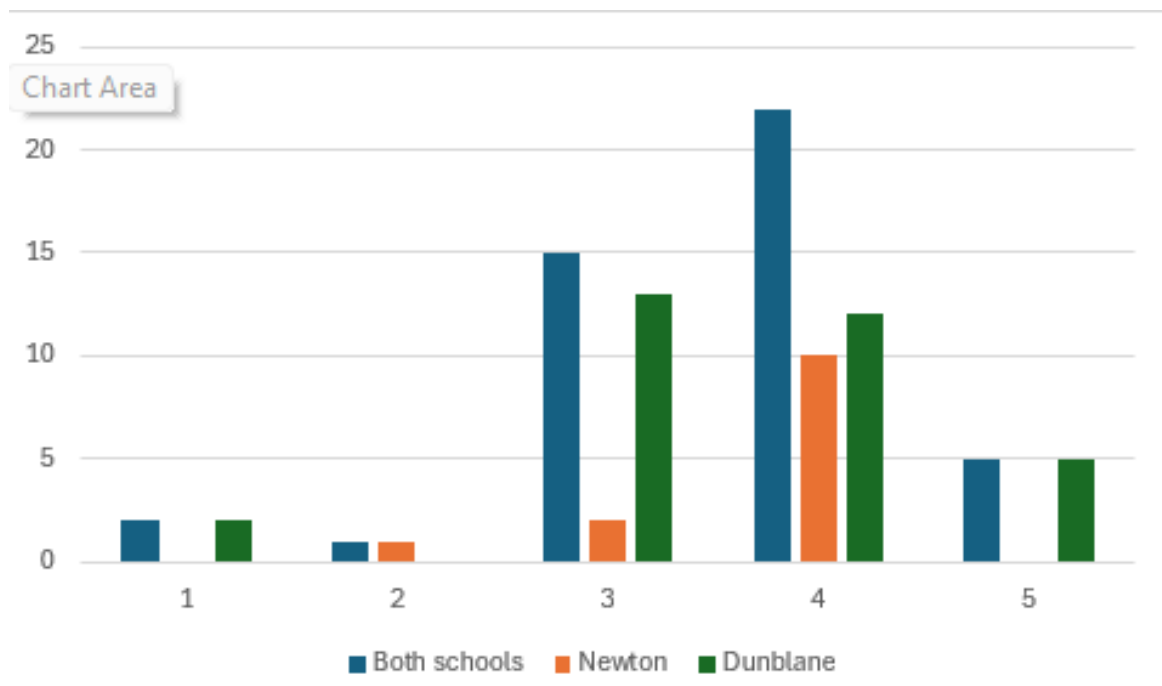
<https://soundcloud.com/user-861156817/dunblane-sounds-ecofest-2026>

This follows the sequence of sound-making natural phenomena described in Psalm 148 of the Christian Bible, although this was also evident to the pupils as a set of natural categories:

- Breathing and music suggesting the early, extra-terrestrial phases of the formation of the universe
- Life in Water
- The Storm (Elemental Sounds)
- Plant Life
- Animal Life
- Humans

The soundscape was sent to schools after the workshops, together with an information sheet (see appendix b) suggesting how this might be used for further listening activities.

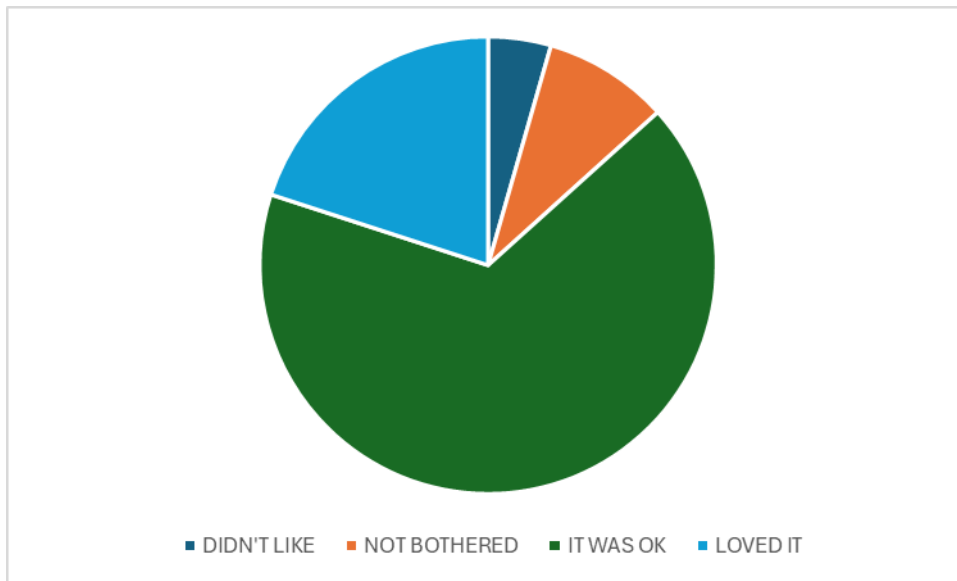
2.1. How Much Did You Like the Workshops? (1-5, worst to best)



Both the lowest and the highest scores came from the same School (Dunblane Primary), with most children in both schools clustering in the '4' (good) zone. Given that the workshop involved some activities which were outside pupil's normal comfort zones, and despite individual pupils enjoying some aspects more than others, this seems like a positive outcome.

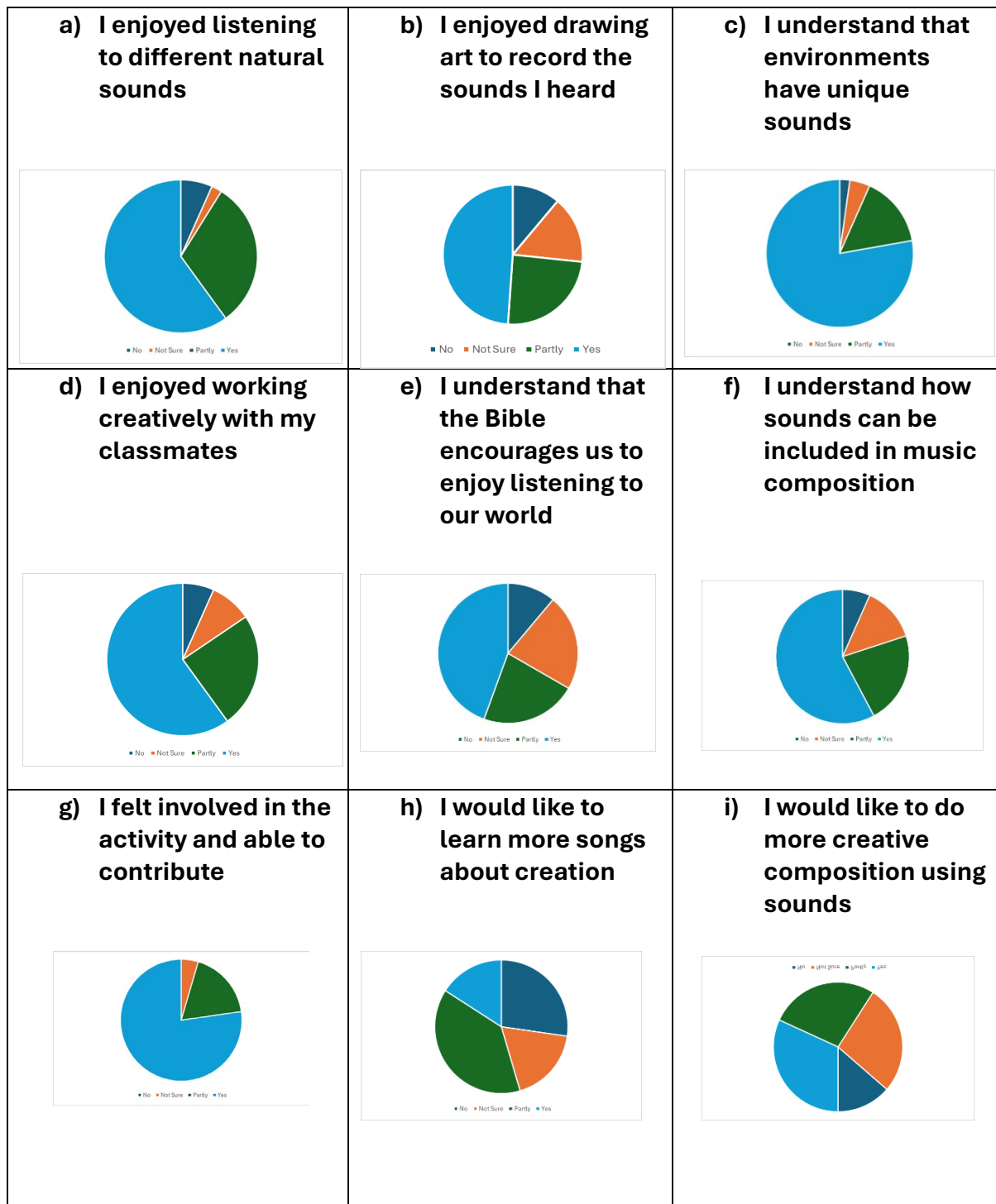
In response to the question **"have you done composition before?"**, 8 pupils said 'No', 25 were not sure, and 12 answered yes. The lower scores for 'liked' were given by a Newton PS pupil who said 'yes' they had done composition before, and who scored 2 for enjoyment; and one of the two '1' scores from Dunblane. This is a very small sample, but possibly pupils who feel they are more musically expert might be more resistant to composition which uses sound rather than appearing to be conventionally 'musical'. A similar pattern of resistance to soundscapes was encountered in the more traditionally 'musical' of the adults in the St Andrews workshop. Of the two pupils who actively disliked performing the composition, 1 had previous composition experience and also did not enjoy the workshop overall, and one who enjoyed (4) the workshop overall, but not performing. There were differences for what was liked or not liked within the lower answers which resists a simple explanation, and no obvious correlation between those who were less comfortable with the question about the Bible and overall enjoyment. The most obvious correlation was that the small number of pupils scoring 1-2 for enjoyment were more negative about the graphic score drawing exercise.

2.2. What did you feel about the piece you composed?



The pupils' performance of the soundscape segments in their workshop was in all cases quite rough and ready, but nevertheless coherent and all groups kept on task even if a few children were quieter in performance than they had been while making / practicing the composition. This was an unfamiliar kind of output involving some level of self-exposure while making odd sounds in front of peers, so a majority 'Ok' result and 9 'Loved it' could be considered a good outcome. The surveys were filled out in class before the schools had done any kind of follow up work listening to the actual sound file, so we think this response is to the memory of the live-performed sound rather than to the audio file itself. Most pupils also had a similarly positive response to the questions about the process of composition.

2.3. Learning review: what did or didn't you enjoy or understand?



Code:



Quantitative Responses suggest that the most positive aspects of the workshop were those directly associated with listening to natural sounds, understanding that environments have unique soundscapes, and working collaboratively and creatively. Several free text ‘best bits’ also highlighted listening. Drawing sounds as graphic scores was a little less favoured but still overall positive with 6 pupils who had this as their favourite activity in free text. While some pupils were also cautious about sound composition, we also had many positive comments about this in the free text (j) below. Responses to the Bible comprehension question reflected a majority positive learning outcome (understanding content), with some resistance to the task reflected in more mixed responses to whether they wanted to learn more songs ‘about creation’; this is reasonable within a secular education context. As described in the introduction, one pupil asked whether reading the Bible ‘at’ people was offensive: the data shows at least pupils understood what faith contexts might present. Practical exercises were focussed on actual sounds and experiences rather than on reproducing any scriptural texts verbally. We conclude that finding common ground based on shared values / ethics on issues such as the environment is more acceptable to pupils (and probably to their parents) than discussing religious belief without establishing that common ground.

j) What was your favourite part of the workshop (free text)?

- *Listening / being outside (13):*

Going outside

Listening to natural sounds

Listening to different natural sounds

Listening

Listening to the sounds of music

Listening to the natural sounds

When we got to go outside

Hearing the sounds

Listening outside to hear sounds like the wind animals etc

Listening to the music at the end

Listening to nature

Going outside

The sounds like birds and cars

- *Drawing (6):*

The sound drawings

I liked the drawing/colouring

The art

Drawing

I liked drawing the sounds I heard
The drawing

- *Composing (12):*

Making the composition
Making the noises
Making the song
Making the song
Making the music (drew music notes)
Last bit (composing)
I liked making sounds with our voices
Making our composition
Making music
The end where everyone made their noises
Making the music
I liked hearing the life on land (*this was part of the composition)

- *Working in a group (3):*

Making noises with my group
The music groups
I liked it when we went into our groups and made sounds to do with nature

- *Generally Positive / format (2):*

Everything
Being active and involved

- *Generally Negative (2):*

“The end”
I did not like anything

k) Where there any bits of the workshop that could have been better for you?

- *On Listening outside (3):*

More things that are outdoors

Yes, when we were listening, I could only really hear people talking (*interesting review point this, because humans were clearly the noisiest aspect of this environment!)

Not sitting so close to the road (*this was indeed the least ‘natural’ listening station)

- *On Drawing (2):*

Not using charcoal as it was easily smudged and I didn't like the sound it made
Not using Charcoal

- *On format (4):*

More things all done together

We were a bit rushed so maybe it could've gone slower (**one class was cut to an hour to allow walking back to catch buses*)

It could have been more active

More stuff to do (**we already felt that the workshop was quite packed – these pupils might find listening challenging*).

- *On composing (1):*

Making the animal sounds in front of everyone (**we were not surprised to get this comment, because this part of the composition was definitely a stretch for one or two pupils in each class, who found it embarrassing; it only occurred once, however.*)

j) Anything else you would like to tell us about your day?

Positive (12):

I enjoyed everything

Everyone was quiet for once

It was a fun day when I went to St Mary's church

It was really fun and interesting

It was very fun because I liked listening to all the sounds and then writing about what I heard

Not really :)

I enjoyed it

I really enjoyed the music making

It was fun

I had lots of fun

It was fun

It was fun!

Points for improvement (2 negative comments):

Yes, it could be a lot more active than sitting down and it was really hard to focus when we were listening

I think it could be more active and musical

3. All-Ages Workshop (Dunblane) 9th May: listen, sing, worship

The all-ages weekend workshop involved 21 participants for the full hour, with another 7 dropping in for part of the time including 2 children with parents. Participation was walk-in, not pre-registered. Completion of the survey was optional, and because the service of worship followed immediately afterwards, we focussed on allowing this to flow, and people to either stay or go at that stage, rather on paper gathering; surveys and consents were made available at the back of the church from the end of the workshop.

This event was designed to connect with the earlier Schools workshops and was framed by the wider Eco-festival.



Image 1: Dunblane Eco-fest 2026 Poster

The Dunblane Eco-fest is a partnership between a wide range of local and national organisations, encouraging community awareness of issues and actions relevant to the local environment. The central weekend brings different groups and organisations together in St Mary's SEC church hall and grounds to share initiatives and experiences (see *Image 1, above*). The festival involves both people of faith and none, and organisations working in the local community who share an interest in the environment.

The workshop and church service allowed local people to enjoy the art and sound made by the pupils earlier in the week, and to learn songs together which were then shared in a formal service of worship. Unlike in the schools' events, participants came into the church entirely of their own volition, and we could therefore expect a stronger and more consensual engagement with any explicitly religious content. The workshop was intended to be all-ages accessible, using simple music, much of which used a Scottish-folk style. Music was learned aurally using word projection on a screen; no prior musical skills were assumed.

Most participants would have spent some time in the church hall before the workshop, encountering there a variety of local stalls covering issues including red squirrels, bees, water catchment improvements, solar panel and alternative energies, and mending, recycling and reuse initiatives. One of the schools participating in the week's school workshops, Newton Primary, had a display of project work they had done on water, which might have helped to frame their workshop engagement more generally. This school is proud to be part of the 'Eco Schools' network, demonstrating sustained attention to the environmental agenda (see *Figure 2*). The earlier part of the day also featured street food, home baking, a jazz band, games, and local youth participation from the Boys' Brigade, all of which helped to establish a fun, informative, and inclusive atmosphere.

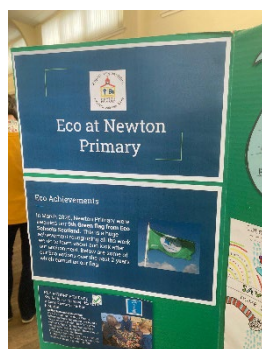


Image 2: Newton Primary School, Dunblane, Eco-school information

As participants approached and entered St Mary's Church, the Rector, Revd Canon Nerys Brown, had produced helpful information boards for the front door and in the entrance area explaining what participants were seeing and hearing (*Images 3&4 below*). There was also an opportunity on the day to respond by drawing sound pictures (paper and charcoal provided), although on Saturday 9th May there was not much sign of any drawing being done. The signs, however, meant that even before the singing workshop started, a lot had been done to help frame the event and its context.



Images 3&4: Entering the Church

During the school workshops, pupils had been able to hear their soundscape composition performed and listen to their classmates' segments. Between that time and the public workshop, the sound segments from the 4 workshops had been mixed and edited with a little bit of introductory (and very basic) music, to produce a sequence of 5 longer, and one final Coda section. In the context of the church service and exhibition, this could be explicitly connected with Biblical texts such as the Benedicite and Psalm 148 which list different ways in which nature/creation makes noise. The soundscape was playing on a loop throughout the day, and before the final service.

The end of day service liturgy was designed around the incremental growth of a rainbow: initial violet / indigo colours connected with songs expressing sadness and lament, followed by blue / green / yellow suggesting natural environmental engagement and mobilising positive emotions of hope, wonder, and gratitude; and finishing with orange / red colours associated with change and active responses. Discussion within the workshop also circled round how the emotions aroused by music reflect and enable a range of different responses to the environment alongside helping to express and build a relationship with God, seeing the Creator working through all aspects of the natural world, including our own breathing and being alive.

Dunblane All-Ages Survey Results

Only 4 people completed the survey, and perhaps unsurprisingly this was the group most enthusiastic about the nature soundscape, 100% saying they loved it.

The sample size is rather too small to draw wider conclusions and will likely reflect this group's alignment with the strong framing of religious and environmental values present on this occasion. All respondents strongly agreed that they understand that places have unique sounds, that the Bible talks about listening to nature, and that listening helps them to appreciate the created world. All wanted to listen to more soundscapes, of whom only 1 could say confidently they had heard a soundscape before, and all wanted to learn more songs. The one question with a slightly lower response was asked if they enjoyed the sound drawings made by the pupils, of which 1 said "very much", 2 said "partly", and 1 missed out this question. I conclude tentatively that drawing sound maps is more effective as a process aid or a record of personal encounter than as a third person communication tool, which would align with the original design of this task within a framework of environmental fieldwork training.

- **Favourite part of the workshop** (free text): 3 of the 4 responses focussed on the singing, and 1 on the soundscape.

"Singing and learning new songs – soulful"

"The liveliness and the variety of the children's sounds"

"The variety of music"

"The leader was very informed and showed as we progressed"

- **Suggestions for improvement:**

“A longer session”

“No - this one I enjoyed and welcomed the number of people who came to the singing event”

“Having the music would have helped “

In response to the last point above, not knowing how many people would come, we prepared slides projected onto a screen with the words, and learned songs aurally, which we intended to be inclusive of a range of abilities. This also intentionally encouraged listening, which was a priority for the Dunblane events, even if challenging for music readers. Projection also saved on printing / paper, which felt appropriate to the eco theme. However, this did mean that songs needed to be simple.

- **Anything Else?**

“I had the chance to observe the children generating their drawing and sounds and liked the freedom given to them to steer the exercises, adults in supporting (but not leading) roles” (**this person also highlighted the enjoyed the variety of sounds in the soundscape, and partly enjoyed the final audio composition*)

“It was great - a great opportunity and I invited work colleagues and family”

“Very good use of time - felt relaxed afterwards and it really enhanced the worship”

The last point connecting singing, listening, and wellbeing was also raised in discussion by participants at the St Andrews singing workshop.

Most people at the workshop stayed on for the service immediately afterwards, details of which are in the appendix. Throughout the afternoon we were also able to enjoy rainbow effects produced by the stained-glass windows in the Church (the new Benedicite window in particular) (see below).



4. Adult Workshop St Andrews: listen, sing, study, worship

Saturday 16th May 2026 was the 4th in an annual series of “study and sing” workshops, which have in the past explored traditional repertoires of hymns and psalms, and involved some level of academic study input. 49 people, including session leaders, attended, with a few more dropping in for the end of day service.

The average age was somewhat older than the Saturday Dunblane event, including a high proportion of people who are actively involved in church music making as singers, ministry and/or accompanists, as well as people who are congregational singers. Participants were both from the immediate local area and also many who had travelled from different areas of Scotland, in one case from the Channel Islands, to attend. The choice of music was slightly more complex than it had been in Dunblane; however, as with Dunblane, we introduced new songs and the workshop had a broad focus on contemporary worship styles, encouraging new ways to listen and respond to the environment in a faith context. The service at the end of the day included only one traditional hymn: All Creatures of Our God and King, using a well-known hymn tune.

The intergenerational link between workshop participants and younger people in this case involved undergraduate and recent postgraduate Masters students from the University of St Andrews, who were given opportunities to create material and present this in the workshop. The general brief for these student-driven tasks was to provide cognitive priming for attentive listening to the sounds of Creation.

The programme comprised:

- An introductory 30-minute lecture on ‘ecothology’, delivered by Dr Michael Lyons, a University of St Andrews Old Testament scholar, outlining the challenge of interpreting ancient texts in a contemporary period of environmental crisis.
- A vocal warmup and music learning session centred on breathing as a sign of life and a gift of Creation, using a new responsorial chant setting of *Genesis* 1 by Luis Meseguer Mira (MLitt Sacred Music, 2025).⁸ Quite a few of the survey comments highlighted this work as a highlight, and we used it to end the worship service later in the day. It set us up, at the end of a Saturday, for the Sabbath ‘day of rest’. Anyone interested in singing this piece should contact Luis via his website.
- A video lecture from Professor Ian Bradley on the theology of Creation in musical theatre, discussing ‘the book of nature’ as an ethical source, and suggesting how church groups might use songs from e.g. *The Lion King* (1994), *Show Boat* (1927) and Roger Miller’s ‘Waiting for the Light to Shine’ from *Big River: The Adventures*

⁸ Luis Meseguer Mira, composer website *Music in Caelum* <https://www.luismeseguer.com/>

of *Huckleberry Finn* (1985).⁹ Our accompanist for the day, 3rd year Philosophy student Luke Norman, also explained briefly how *Huckleberry Finn* had been used in his course as an exemplary case for natural, lived experience as an alternative to formally taught ethical knowledge and spiritual insight.

- A mid-day session on the psalms as a source of instruction on nature as sounding God's praise; this covered one contemporary worship song and also gave participants an opportunity to hear the Dunblane children's creative soundscape, again explicitly linking this to Psalm 148. As in Dunblane, this soundscape was also played just before the end of day worship service.
- To encourage an experience of listening, the St Andrews participants were given a listening 'scavenger hunt' task to do in the lunch break, which primed attentive listening using citations to Psalm passages. This was designed by Kirstin Spence, a St Andrews 4th Year Geography and Sustainable Development student, who had previously taken part in a research internship project designing teaching aids for biodiversity listening in environmental fieldwork. Kirstin's previous project also includes educational resources for environmental listening, suitable for adaptation by age groups ranging from c10 years to adult.¹⁰ We had drawn upon Kirstin's work on graphic scores and 'sound maps' in designing the Dunblane school workshops. For St Andrews, she created a visually attractive resource which we hope will find wider distribution and use. Participants were encouraged to take additional copies of the scavenger hunt back to their home churches for all-ages work, and we think this is now going to be used in several summer camps; it has also been passed into the Forest Church network.¹¹
- After lunch, the afternoon session discussed contemporary praise songs and new hymn responses, encouraging participants to reflect on this repertoire in their different faith contexts. Songs contrasted lament with praise, the former using a recent song by John Bell ('Because', 2025)¹². Student input included:
 - Charis Yip (2nd year psychology student). Charis used her experience of praise bands in Free Church environments and composed a new contemporary worship song ('The Call of Creation', 2025), with guitar lead and lyrics sheet, and with words reflecting her observations of natural sounds as evidence of God's work in Creation.¹³

⁹ See Ian Bradley, *The Music of the Night: Religious Influences and Spiritual Resonances in Operetta and Musical Theatre* (OUP, 2025)

¹⁰ See Kirstin Spence, "An ecological sound education: listening for biodiversity". <https://birch.wp.st-andrews.ac.uk/projects/an-ecological-sound-education-listening-for-biodiversity/> University of St Andrews, 2025

¹¹ UK Forest Church Facebook group, https://www.facebook.com/groups/forestchurch/?locale=en_GB

¹² John Bell, 'Because' (2025) – an anniversary hymn for SCIAF <https://www.sciaf.org.uk/resources/838-sciafs-anniversary-hymn>

¹³ Charis Yip, 'Call of Creation' (2025). Listen to Charis singing this on https://soundcloud.com/charis_chords/call-of-creation © Charis Yip Dec. 2025, St Andrews, UK. Creative Commons License CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 ; Email cypishop@gmail.com for use of the song.

- Archie Moore (4th year MTheol student who had taken an honours module on ecotheology). Like Charis, Archie worships with a Free Church congregation. Archie built a playlist of contemporary Christian Worship songs for at-home listening, with notes to assist people new to this repertoire.
- The final session of the day reviewed the music to be used in the final worship service, which was hosted in St Andrew's Scottish Episcopal Church by the Rev Canon Professor Trevor Hart with a homily by Rev Dr Katrin Bosse.
- We tried to allow enough time in tea and lunch breaks for people to meet and talk with each other as well as to discuss and respond throughout the sessions. Participants' feedback showed people particularly enjoyed this opportunity to make new contacts and friends.

St Andrews Survey Results

As before, the priority was to allow a flow of experience from workshop to the (optional) end of day service. Twelve surveys were returned after the end of the event, just under 25% of participants, with some additional email communication thanking us for the day and giving some additional feedback.

9/12 (75%) rated enjoyment at the top level of 5, and another 3 rated this as 4.

Questions for this group asked:

- Did the listening exercise ('scavenger hunt' citing psalms) help to connect experience of the created world with the Bible: 10/12 said yes, 2 'not sure'
- Did they like the new compositions made by the students? 10/12 said 'loved it', 2 said it was ok (this is good for a group with more traditional musical tastes).
- What did they think of the soundscape made by the Dunblane school children? 4/12 (33%) said 'loved it', 7/12 (just over ½) said 'it was ok'. 1 didn't like it (and also didn't want to listen to more soundscapes) (again, good given group tastes).
- Did they understand that environments have unique sounds: 100% said yes
- Did they think that the Bible encourages us to listen to the world: 9/12 said yes, 1/12 'partly', 2/12 'not sure'.
- Would they like to learn more songs about Creation: (responses partly reflect tastes in contemporary praise songs) 7/12 yes, 3/12 partly, 1/12 'not sure', 1/12 no (from someone who came as a declared non-singer, and who otherwise did

enjoy listening to the children's soundscape and natural sound scavenger hunt).

- Would they like to listen to more soundscapes using natural sounds: 4/12 yes, 5/12 'partly', 1/12 'not sure', 2/12 no (one of whom was a more traditional church musician).
- Whether singing helped them to think about and appreciate Creation – 11/12 yes, 1/12 not sure
- Whether listening helped them to think about and appreciate Creation – 12/12 yes.

These responses are overall more mixed than the Dunblane all-ages workshop about new, non-traditional music forms, which might have been expected given the experience profile of this group and the absence of the strong Eco-fest event frame. However, it is notable that listening emerges here as one area where there was unanimity of response, and within a workshop that contained a variety of experiences to suit different tastes, everyone broadly enjoyed their experience. A comment from one person who was more ambivalent about soundscape composition was that listening to natural sounds inside, i.e. not actually immersed in the actual environment, 'didn't work' for them; this is a fair comment, and they did go on to say that literally listening to natural sounds did help them to appreciate Creation.

We started the day with a short 30-minute overview lecture from Dr Michael Lyons (School of Divinity, University of St Andrews) on the challenge of interpreting ancient scripture in a period of contemporary eco-crisis. Some of the more theologically confident participants found this very useful, two found it pitched rather ambitiously but were happy with subsequent sessions. As the workshop is labelled 'study and sing' and happens in a University environment, we want to keep some level of 'study' in the programme, but it is useful to be aware how finely balanced this needs to be, and how – inevitably – different people will have different takeaways from this aspect of the day.

Some of the free text feedback revealed a spread of opinion, depending on both confessional background and personal taste, about what kind of sounds 'worked' in worship, and that it was interesting to explore and discuss that diversity. Most people found the listening exercise was useful (the 'scavenger hunt' citing the psalms that was given out just before lunchtime to enjoy while outside in that hour), although one person suggested it would be more effective for children than adults.

Everyone either loved the music composed by students or found it 'ok', which was satisfying. In general, allowing students to contribute their creative work into the day was highlighted by several in the surveys as a strength of the day. While the participants in the St Andrews workshop did not themselves compose anything new, many did

appreciate this event as being built around opportunities for other (*and specifically young) people to be creative.

- **Free text highlights** were:

“Singing in harmony with the others and listening to the overall result”

“Talk by Ian Bradley and making links between ecotheology and secular music theatre”

“Michael Lyons’ talk, Luis’s composition (Genesis 1)’s, Katrin address”

“I enjoyed the service, and I thought it was a great idea to have the input from the students who spoke to us”

“I enjoyed the singing and learning new songs, especially singing in harmony. There was a good variety of different styles. The themes and questions raised about Ecotheology were very interesting. I was also very interested in the multidisciplinary approach to the day e.g. the participation of students including the new Geography field work, listening techniques leading to sound appreciation in the environment. I would hope this could be spread wider among children, schools and church Youth Groups.”

“We could see a potential to use the Listening Scavenger Hunt at Forest Church. I also enjoyed the contemporary worship song which reflected a close reflection of experiencing God in nature.”

“The interdisciplinary aspect and having students share their learning”

“Lots of good moments, the theological introduction, learning to sing Luis's piece, hearing the children's composition”

“The first lecture which showed God's involvement with the world and hence the impact of theology on the environmental movement. I enjoyed the chant setting of the creation text.”

“It is really hard to pick a favourite thing as it was all great but here are three highlights. I didn't expect to see one of our SGSD (Sustainable Development) students there presenting work she had done with Jane and my colleagues; it was wonderful and fantastic to hear unsolicited comments from the public about how great it was to see what the students are doing: this is impact and engagement as it should be done and it made me immensely proud. Here were 40 members of the public who know nothing about what we do in our school being captured by our students and their work. I loved what was done with the Dunblane kids and their composition which sounded awesome in the church. I also really loved the piece of sacred music composed by the ex-student - learning this was outside my musical comfort zone but really engages me - it was a really good thing to start the day with this and end it in the worship session, which as a service I really valued.”

“I love sight reading. It's like opening a new book to discover what's there. It's stimulating and so was the day.”

“Learning the students' compositions and hearing about the students' experiences; observing the challenges for churches of handling different styles of music. Above all, the very enlightening and enriching multi-disciplinary approach and participation.”

“Listening to the conversation between Ian Bradley and [the workshop organiser]”

- **Free text suggested improvements** were:

“It was good to see the children's listening exercise, but I didn't think it was relevant to the adult group. However, I did pass it on to our Messy Church who were grateful.”

“I thought it all very thought-provoking. Enjoyed the singing and all of the input from [workshop leader] and others”

“All great, well-balanced and stimulating”

“It might have started a little later in the day!”

“I would have appreciated a bit more time to discuss the approaches and styles of worship among ourselves as we came from diverse backgrounds. Also, some time to discuss the ideas about Ecotheology presented.”

“No, I loved it and I still sing it in my head. There is a detail - x [student named] was moving a bit too much while speaking.”

“It would have been nice to do the listening exercise outside together or in small groups?”

“The event ran smoothly. There was a chance to talk.”

“I didn't feel the first speaker hit the mark. I'm familiar with ecotheology but I felt I needed to be to appreciate what he was saying. Given the audience, I'm not sure whether it delivered. (Another person, by email, suggested that they found the initial academic talk on ‘what is ecotheology’ rather daunting, but was reassured by the subsequent participatory sessions).”

“Whereas the lady who didn't read music found learning more complicated with a lead-sheet layout, I realised that John Bell's hymn would have been easier to learn if the words had been printed between the staves for all verses and not just the first. Or I would have wanted to learn the tune separately first.”

“No not really - It was a day of discovery for me, and I "discovered"”

- **Any final thoughts?**

“The church service was a perfect end to the day when everything came together beautifully. Well thought-out. Thank you.”

“Brilliantly organised”

“I appreciated that a huge amount of work had gone into the event, which was very well run with an excellent variety of presentations”

“Overall, it was an excellent day in every way and thank you for teaching us so well!”

“I’m looking for ways to share my faith and I feel really inspired by the first speaker who said that our hope is the new heaven and new earth. I was really moved by the song written by Charis Yip.”

“It was a great day. I'm glad I made the time in what turned out to be a very busy week. It has inspired me to go deeper into my own listening practice and helped with an audio piece I was composing at the time. However, it was the theological introduction rather than the singing that has had most impact on me, cause me to rethink my relationship with nature.”

“The overall day was a wonderful revelation for me. I signed up with some trepidation as I don't read music, don't sing usually in a choir, and am generally a bit quiet about my faith - but it was soul filling in its completeness. I was learning and appreciating as I went along and when I got home felt like I had spent a day with God in a glimpse of what heaven might be like. I have been raving about the event including to some friends who would not cross the threshold of church. One dear long-standing Christian friend who lives in Pembrokeshire said, do you think they would come and do that in St David's (cathedral)... something to think about”

“Listening to natural sounds when I am not in the natural surroundings I find a bit of a misfit. This, I am sure, says more about me and what I'm used to. It's the same when a programme on the radio transmits natural sounds. It doesn't 'transport' me in the same way a piece of music does that is interpreting the environment. This was the first of these events that I have attended. Meeting up with people who I know from different contexts was good as well as meeting completely new people. It was amazing how the service came together (though I would say the homily was too long for the service).”

“Thoroughly enjoyable and well presented. I felt completely relaxed despite learning several new pieces from scratch in a say I would not have imagined (such a short time!) The opening presentation was fascinating, as was the video. The homily at the service helped tie the themes and experiences together very effectively.”

“I enjoyed it immensely.”

5. Conclusion

The design and responses to these workshops reflect the profiles of attendees in obvious ways.

- **Optionality.** With volunteers, one can assume a more explicit Christian faith alignment; with schools, religious concepts need to be handled much more carefully, allowing pupils to encounter the material without necessarily being required to sing or say words that might imply or coopt expressions of belief.
- **Diversity.** Even with volunteer adults, there may be a variety of confessional traditions and personal tastes that will shape how people respond to different kinds of music (and sound) content. Providing a variety of material, an explanation of context, and opportunities to discuss diverse responses helped participants to encounter new material, even if they preferred some elements to others.
- **Times and places.** The immediate contexts within which workshops occur obviously shapes participant's expectations and acceptance thresholds. Running the St Andrews workshop in a Music Centre rather than in a church made it easier to unpack the secular (music theatre) material; running the Dunblane workshop in an Eco-festival week made the church venue feel like a natural extension of site activities.
- **Common ethical ground.** Across all workshops, school and adult, providing a strongly articulated framework of shared values – here, environmental ethics – made it easier to explore a range of beliefs connected with sounds and music that were not necessarily what the participants normally considered or would usually 'prefer' to sing or listen to. Pupils could appreciate Bible content and enjoy creating sound-based compositions, and Dunblane adults could enjoy pupil's work, and connect this with their own songs and worship, both within the context of Eco-fest. The St Andrews workshop, which was not framed by a local Eco-festival and which involved people whose music-making would normally involve more traditional repertoire, nevertheless were prepared both to learn contemporary songs and appreciate the spirit of the soundscape. The evidence is that across all three groups, a common sense of environmental value meant people of different ages and experience were more open minded in engaging with new sounds and music than they might otherwise have been.
- **Creativity** – making new sounds - was particularly valued both by children and adults, not simply for the finished product (where different tastes found the new work likeable to a different degree) but as evidence of a process of active involvement and attention-giving to nature. Those of faith would be comfortable with the term 'Creation' connecting natural sounds to a Creator; others could

still appreciate this as a sensory engagement with nature, and a response to a basic human need to innovate and renew.

The research supports our view that listening exercises, and in particular creative responses to environmental listening, can both enhance understanding of the natural environment, and understanding of religious teaching about environmental ethics, providing the exercises are carefully attuned to the expectations and capacities of different groups. Religious studies and environmental studies can be linked and energised using listening and music. We encourage educational musical providers to explore this further.

Appendices

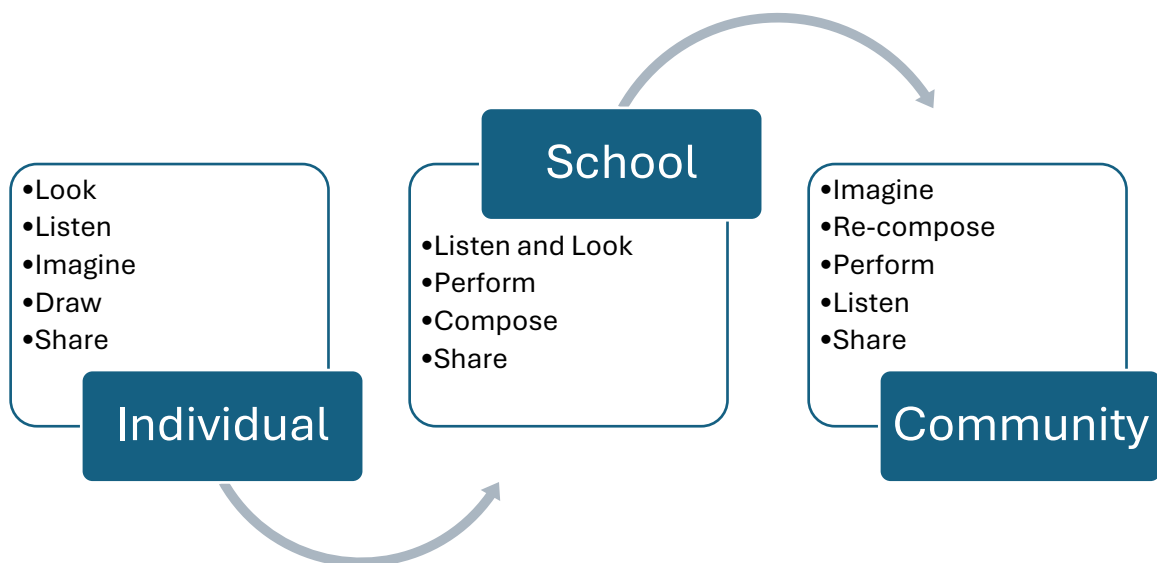
- a. Dunblane Schools Workshop Outline
- b. Dunblane Soundscape Activity Sheet
- c. Dunblane Service Sheet (with Rev Nerys Brown, St Mary's SEC)
- d. Dunblane Service Slides (building a rainbow)
- e. St Andrews Study and Sing Participant Pack
- f. St Andrews Service Sheet
- g. Listening Scavenger Hunt (Kirstin Spence)
- h. New Contemporary Worship Song: Call of Creation (Charis Yip)

Listening to Creation: Eco-Festival Dunblane 2026

Teacher Pack / Lesson Plans

Contents

1. Aims / overview
2. School Workshop Plan (3 hours)
3. All-ages workshop (Saturday, 45 minutes): compiling/rehearsing
4. Sharing in Worship
5. Appendix 1: The Bible and Creation (excerpts)



1. Aims:

- To encourage active listening to God's created world as a means to understand our relationship as one creature amongst many in the local ecosystem of our town.
- To encounter some key scriptural texts which celebrate the diversity of the created world, which speak about the created world's response to God's gift of life, and which suggest human ethical responses to the environment we share with others.
- To use listening and reading to inspire creative response in the form of a) drawings (sound maps / graphic scores) and b) a collaborative music composition using text and environmental sounds.
- To ensure that the outcomes of this can be shared appropriately across different ages (schools workshops P6; all ages Saturday workshop and worship).

Additionally, the schools workshops are intended to support multiple areas of the Scottish Curriculum for Excellence, i.e.

a) **¹Religious and moral education:** recognising religion as an important expression of human experience, learning about Christianity, recognising the place of Christianity in the Scottish context, developing beliefs and attitudes through reflection, discovery and critical evaluation.

b) **²Expressive arts:** "experiencing the inspiration and power of the arts"; "partnerships"; opportunity to present/perform; using visual means to communicate ideas; using voice to respond to stimuli and communicate ideas with sound, working with others; awareness of timbre – the tone quality which distinguishes one sound source from another – as a musical quality.

c) **³Health and Wellbeing:** developing respect for others; participating in activities which promote a healthy lifestyle (*nurturing positive relationships)

d) **⁴Literacy and talking:** exploring choices of words in scripture, thinking about the main ideas contained within a complex text using suitable vocabulary, creating texts

e) **⁵Sciences.** "develop an understanding of the Earth's resources and the need for responsible use of them"; "express opinions about environmental issues"

¹ See <https://education.gov.scot/media/hg0nltic/rme-eo.pdf>

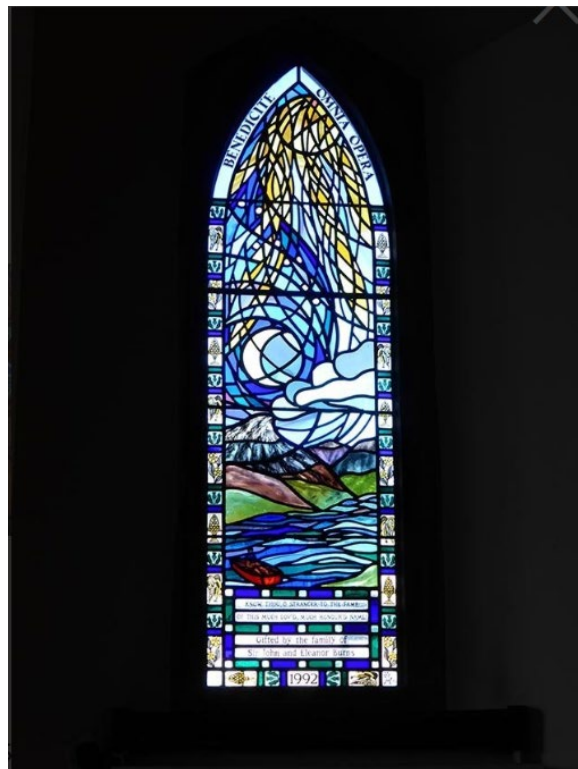
² See <https://education.gov.scot/media/ogyjyehk/expressive-arts-eo.pdf>

³ See <https://education.gov.scot/media/5p4dvqvm/health-and-wellbeing-eo.pdf>

⁴ <https://education.gov.scot/media/qhxmxfq/literacy-english-eo.pdf>

⁵ See <https://education.gov.scot/media/jcxpmwd5/sciences-eo.pdf>

While the CfE includes statements about environmental sciences within its syllabus, the organisers of this programme suggest that the Scottish national framework could do more to engage explicitly with sustainability principles articulated by the UNESCO programme of **Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)**⁶. Particular areas of interest here are sustainable development goals 3 (Good Health and Well-being, particularly positive physical and mental health), 11 (Sustainable communities, particularly contextualising human needs within the needs of the surrounding ecosystem, understanding urban ecology) and 15 (Life on Land, specifically awareness of the local ecosystem and developing empathy with non-human life on earth; we are part of nature and not apart from nature). Extending these into ESD competencies would include: thinking about human life within complex systems, imagining richer futures, and working through collaboration with others.⁷



⁶ See <https://www.unesco.org/en/sustainable-development/education> - reference to Education for Sustainable Development: Learning Objectives (UNESCO, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000247444>)

⁷ See <https://www.unsdglearn.org/unesco-cross-cutting-and-specialized-sdg-competencies/>

2. Schools Workshop Plan

There will be 4 of these workshops, delivered for 3 different schools: morning/afternoon for 2 days.

Duration: 180 minutes

Age: P6 (aged 10)

Whole class – c30 pupils

Materials required: (*ensure eco-friendly products e.g. [A3 Natural Recycled Paper 100 Pk eco-craft](#))

- per child: a peg (St Mary's has wooden pegs), sheets of A4 recycled paper, charcoal sticks, and an A4 size cardboard square (St Mary's has c30 A4 clip boards) (*cardboard to use as makeshift clipboard, to lean on) (*St Mary's has some paper and card in their craft room)
- coloured chalks to share
- jute string for hanging sound maps (me)
- for groupwork composition: A3 sheets; cutouts 'briefs' with copies of psalm 148 verses of 'noisy things'

2.1. Gather: Whole Group Discussion (10 min)

(Welcome – Rector)

Most world religions – including Christianity – believe that the world was created by a Creator, who gives life to all kinds of created things, and from whom the structure and order in the world originates.

There are two windows in this church that celebrate the created world – you'll have the opportunity to look at them in your group work later this session. For now – can you see them?

[may take a few minutes here to let the pupils find the windows, and then regather at the front] [questions to all]

- What did you see on those windows?
- If you were making a window that showed nature around Dunblane, what might you add?
- Have you seen that?
- What other senses might you use to notice things in your environment?

Today we are going to think a bit about what listening can tell us about the world we live in, and because we are in a church, we will be thinking about how Christians might hear

all these noises as a kind of living praise to the Creator. Humans share the created world with lots of other creatures, big and small, loud and quiet. Thinking just about Dunblane, how would you describe the sounds you can hear within 100 meters of where you are currently sitting? (hands up) (allow about 5 minutes, prompted by these questions):

- What sounds are made by humans? Does this change at different times of day?
- What noises might be made by other living things? (prompt for very quiet sounds like worms...) Might this also change at different times of day?
- What sounds might be made by the elements (wind, water)? Does this change at different times of year?
- Which set of sounds is the noisiest – humans, other creatures, or elements?

Living in a town, humans make a great deal of noise. In a minute we are going to take a few minutes outside, to be very quiet, to give other sounds a chance to be heard.

We've just divided your list into different **categories** of things. That's the kind of thing that science does – sort and label things, as part of noticing them. Noticing is important to looking after the world because knowing the names of things helps us to notice both when they are present and also when they are absent. For example – not just birds but seagulls, or blackbirds – names matter. You have names too don't you – you aren't just [name of school]. So do other living things.

How do you think we should act towards all these other creatures and forces that share the world with us?

- [their suggestions]

The Bible has a story about creation in the book of Genesis, and we learn there that humans were instructed to use their language to notice and name animals sharing the world with them. Naming things is a way to pay attention, respect, and to think about our responsibilities towards other creatures and forces in our world. Noticing things is the first step in respecting them.

However, we need to remember as well as notice. Recording can be done by machines – but also in more creative ways.

Let's go back to the sounds you listed, and think a bit more about what those sounds are like, to help you remember them.

Use your fingers to draw in the air what you think these sounds might look or feel like.

- Workshop leader - make a range of sounds, high and low, short and long, loud and soft, etc (vocalise) – guide children to translate these into hand gestures - and to point to where the sound comes from.

You could draw this on a piece of paper – where sounds come from around you, and what you think they might look like if they were a line. That’s what we are going to do next. Imagine yourself as a dot on the middle of a page and make marks on the paper when you hear things around you, imagining what that sound would look like if it were a picture.

(Also have some examples of graphic scores on flipchart paper to show).

If you play music, you can use a music score to tell musicians what to play. Next, we are going to use a picture of sounds to tell and show each other what we are hearing.

[moving outside]

2.2. Individual Field Exercise: Listening to the World (20 minutes)

Needs to be outside.

Find a space to sit or stand, in supervised smaller groups but working individually, with each child having a sheet of paper, a clipboard and a charcoal stick.

Remember, you are the dot in the middle and sounds will be coming from all round you, and might even be moving as you listen.

Try to draw lines that look like the thing sounding.

If you know the name of the thing making the sound, you could write that name alongside the line. But the key thing is, making the sound lines.

Sit for 8-10 minutes in total quiet, no talking, just listening, and draw the sounds you hear on the paper to make a sound map. (Leader of each group decide when kids have had enough – some talk can be had at the end of this if you finish early).

At the end of this, you should have a sound map. Put your name on it and bring these back inside the church.

These sound maps and the later group ones will become part of an art installation for the Saturday fete, hung on pegs afterwards in the Church.

2.3. Group Work: Performing the Sound Maps and thinking about the environment around Dunblane (10 minutes)

This might be outside or inside, depending on the weather.

- Ask for volunteers to tell us about the sound map that they have made

Select one or two that seem particularly clear to work with (this may not necessarily be someone who has spoken – you may have noticed a good one from a quiet person if you were circulating during the listening task)

Let's see if we can use this sound map to recreate what this person [name] has heard.

Get the person who made the score to come and help direct and explain this.

- What does each sign on the page represent?
- How can we use our voices and bodies to recreate these different noises?
- Do this sounding out for each sound

Repeated for a couple of sound maps - allowing some time for the final discussion.

- What have we learned from this about the soundscape around Dunblane? How much of what we hear is from humans? How much from other creatures? How can we make space for the sounds of other things that share the world with us?

2.4. Listening to the Benedicite Story : Creation Tells the Glory of God (10 minute)

Inside the church.

One of the reasons you are here today is to learn a bit about what Christianity – and indeed many religions – thinks about the world around us. We've used the words 'creation' and 'creatures' quite a lot today. People who believe in God (and this includes not just Christianity but other faiths such as Islam and Judaism and Hinduism) believe that the world around us is not just a machine governed by purely material laws, but is the work of a Creator. God is the name we give to that Creator.

There are a lot of different ways of thinking about the relationship between God and Creation (the Bible is not a simple text to understand, and people debate about it all the time) but one way to think about

There is a story in the Book of Daniel about 3 young men who were persecuted for believing that God was more important than a King called Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar ordered that his subjects must worship a golden statue he made of himself, and if they didn't, they would be thrown into a furnace and burned alive. Three young men called Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego refused to do bow down to the statue of the king, and so the king threw them into a furnace. The heat was so great that the flames killed those men who were tasked with throwing them in. Amazingly, the 3 youths didn't die but sang hymns asking God to save them, which would prove the Creator was powerful while the golden statue was just that – a statue. The flames were suddenly extinguished by a wet mist that seemed to come from nowhere, and they came out of the flames unharmed; celebrating being alive, they sang a song that imagined and lists all created things praising God. Their song was called the 'Benedicite' or song of blessing – that is the name of one of the windows you looked at earlier, the Benedicite windows.

This song imagines all the created world is full of noises – heard and unheard – of diverse things praising their creator.

It's a song that mirrors songs these youths would have heard in their own worship called psalms – which list all kinds of created things 'praising' the Creator just by being what they are, with humans, creatures. These psalms are a way of noticing the different things in the created world.

- Read psalm 148 (see Appendix)

Wind and rivers and birds can praise their creator just by being themselves. Humans are also able to think about what they have noticed and make art representing this thinking-about-things, which is another kind of praise. Our nature is to be in the world but also to make things that think about and respond to the world. For a Christian artist like the people who made these windows, making is a human way to praise the Creator for the gift of creation. We can't literally make planets or give life to creatures like birds, but we can live in ways that notice and celebrate these things and help to make them flourish. Living well in creation is living so that all things flourish alongside us – not using too much or exhausting the resources of the planet.

2.5. Composing (40 mins / the remaining time)

You've done a lot of work today noticing sounds. Now we are going to use those sounds and perhaps others that you might imagine to help us to celebrate the sounds of Creation: this is going to be a composition using sounds rather than conventional musical instruments, and to make it, we are going to work as a group.

- Before the workshop - have prepared psalm 148 verses 1-6, and then individually 7-10 & 12, with cut-outs of verses for smaller groups for each group with different excerpts.
- Get into groups of 5 to 6 each. Give each group one or more A3 sheets depending on how many groups you have.

We are going to use some lines from the psalms to find sounds for each section of the music.

- Give the short passage of scripture to each group printed on an A3 sheet of paper and some coloured chalk. Working with these excerpts, each group is to find sounds that reflect these words. (*see below for silent music option)
- As you think up your sounds, draw these using the chalk to make a group sound map that will help you to remember what you have made.

*this bit of the workshop is likely to be very noisy! If there are children who need quiet, perhaps put them in a group of quiet people and give them the passage in Psalm 148:1-

4 about space (unheard noises) and possibly let them work in a side area if such exists – they may just like to draw the text in pictures rather than make actual noises]

The final sharing will get each group to read out the verses they were given and perform the sounds they thought up to everyone. The quiet people group could simply hold up their pictures of space (unheard noise) and explain that, first.

The performance will need to be sequential – pick the order of performance to align with the order of the psalm verses.

You have made a composition using sounds in 5 sections, which you have been able to perform together – well done! Christians would hear in this the final verse of psalm 148 – praise to the Creator, who alone is greater than all of this. However, paying attention to the environment is a sensible thing for all humans to do; even if you aren't religious, you have been spending time today listening and composing using natural and imagined sounds.

2.6. Final Thanks and Sending Home.

**The session leader will edit together your school's sheets into one 'composition' alongside the other schools who are working this week.*

These will be in the church at the end of the week and used to inspire a new all-ages composition.

**There will also be a questionnaire to fill in – give to teachers to use to review and return to us later, pending parental consent to share*

Note – action after workshops

Record group compositions – send to self and compile as composition – mix together after workshop – share some of this during the Saturday service.

3. All-Ages Workshop

Eco-music songs - Saturday in Dunblane

Use the practice time to learn some songs which we will be using in the actual service – bring in some instruments from St Andrews (Jane to arrange some simple percussion) – teach the songs. Nerys has someone who can do signing.

- On welcoming at the start, also draw attention to the pupil's sound maps and play some of the recording, so the singing workshop understands the context.

The individual sound maps prepared by pupils in pencil should be pegged around the church.

On arrival – give a short summary of what we did through the week with psalm 148, on listening as a way of noticing the created world, and of the scriptural message about our human responsibility to listen to God's creation and use that knowledge to help it flourish in all its diversity.

Appendix 1: Psalm 148 and The Benedicite

Psalm 148 – highlighted verses used to structure composition groups

1. Praise God! Praise the Creator from the heavens, high above the earth.
2. Praise God, all you angels, and all you armies of heaven.
3. Praise God, sun and moon. Praise him, all you shining stars.
4. Praise God, highest heavens, and you waters above the sky.
5. Let them praise the Creator, because they were created by the Creator's word.
6. The Creator set them in place forever and ever, and made a law that will never end.
7. Praise the Creator from the earth; give praise, you large sea animals and all the oceans.
8. Praise God, lightning and hail, snow and clouds, and stormy winds that obey God's laws.
9. Praise God, mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedar trees.
10. Praise God, you wild animals and all tame animals; you small crawling animals and birds.
11. Praise God, you kings of the earth and all nations, princes and all rulers of the earth.
12. Praise God, humans of all ages.
13. Praise the Creator: God alone is greater, greater than heaven and earth.

Benedicite (Daniel 3:52-90, New Catholic Bible) (not used for composition – too long)

- 1 O all ye Works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord : praise him, and magnify him for ever.
- 2 O ye Angels of the Lord, bless ye the Lord : praise him, and magnify him for ever.
- 3 O ye Heavens, bless ye the Lord :praise him, and magnify him for ever.
- 4 O ye Waters that be above the Firmament, bless ye the Lord :praise him, and magnify him for ever.
- 5 O all ye Powers of the Lord, bless ye the Lord : praise him, and magnify him for ever.
- 6 O ye Sun and Moon, bless ye the Lord : praise him, and magnify him for ever.
- 7 O ye Stars of Heaven, bless ye the Lord : praise him, and magnify him for ever.
- 8 O ye Showers and Dew, bless ye the Lord : praise him, and magnify him for ever.
- 9 O ye Winds of God, bless ye the Lord : praise him, and magnify him for ever.

- 10 O ye Fire and Heat, bless ye the Lord : praise him, and magnify him for ever.
- 11 O ye Winter and Summer, bless ye the Lord : praise him, and magnify him for ever.
- 12 O ye Dews and Frosts, bless ye the Lord : praise him, and magnify him for ever.
- 13 O ye Frost and Cold, bless ye the Lord : praise him, and magnify him for ever.
- 14 O ye Ice and Snow, bless ye the Lord : praise him, and magnify him for ever.
- 15 O ye Nights and Days, bless ye the Lord :praise him, and magnify him for ever.
- 16 O ye Light and Darkness, bless ye the Lord :praise him, and magnify him for ever.
- 17 O ye Lightnings and Clouds, bless ye the Lord :praise him, and magnify him for ever.
- 18 O let the Earth bless the Lord : yea, let it praise him, and magnify him for ever.
- 19 O ye Mountains and Hills, bless ye the Lord : praise him, and magnify him for ever.
- 20 O all ye Green Things upon the Earth, bless ye the Lord :praise him, and magnify him for ever.
- 21 O ye Wells, bless ye the Lord :praise him, and magnify him for ever.
- 22 O ye Seas and Floods, bless ye the Lord :praise him, and magnify him for ever.
- 23 O ye Whales, and all that move in the Waters, bless ye the Lord : praise him, and magnify him for ever.
- 24 O all ye Fowls of the Air, bless ye the Lord : praise him, and magnify him for ever.
- 25 O all ye Beasts and Cattle, bless ye the Lord :praise him, and magnify him for ever.
- 26 O ye Children, bless ye the Lord : praise him, and magnify him for ever.
- 27 O let Israel bless the Lord : praise him, and magnify him for ever.
- 28 O ye Priests of the Lord, bless ye the Lord :praise him, and magnify him for ever.
- 29 O ye Servants of the Lord, bless ye the Lord : praise him, and magnify him for ever.
- 30 O ye Spirits and Souls of the Righteous, bless ye the Lord : praise him, and magnify him for ever.
- 31 O ye holy and humble People of heart, bless ye the Lord : praise him, and magnify him for ever.
- 32 O Ananias, Azarias and Misael, bless ye the Lord : praise him, and magnify him for ever.

Dunblane Ecosounds 2026: Environmental Listening

This information sheet supports classroom use of a soundscape made during workshops involving Newton Primary School, Dunblane Primary School and St Mary's Primary School, hosted by St Mary's SEC Dunblane, with session leaders Jane Pettegree, Ellen Thomson and Dan Kempell from the University of St Andrews Music Centre on May 5th and 6th 2026. See: <https://soundcloud.com/user-861156817/dunblane-sounds-ecofest-2026>

The audio file lasts for 5.48mins arranged in 6 sections. You can press pause between sections to make listening and sharing easier. Each has a variety of different sounds, suggesting different sound-making things and possible responses.

00:00-01:07: **"Music"** (breathing, along with different instruments; simple rhythms might be imitated in a music class)

01:08-01:56: **Life in water** (water noises, and various kinds of sea animals, plus thumps which in a marine environment might be the sounds of things like pile driving or wind farms.)

01:57-02:57: **Weather** (wind, hail, rain, lightning, and the effect this has on other objects like trees which move in response to this; there is a recurring rhythm to listen out for, which might again be imitated by pupils).

02:58-04:16: **Plant life** (research has shown that plants "communicate" using electro-chemical signals; plants live more 'slowly' than humans, so the sounds of growing roots pushing through the ground are moving at a speeded-up rate. What other sounds in the world might humans not be easily aware of, either because they move faster or slower than us, or make sounds outside ranges our ears can hear?)

04:17- 05:37: **Non-human animals** on and above the land (the sounds mix animals from different ecosystems – tropical and Scottish – how might you separate these to live in their appropriate home spaces?)

05:58-end: **Human**. Voices are only one kind of human-made sound; humans also make objects that make sounds; other than musical instruments, what kinds of noise can you think of that are human in origin?

Key general questions which might be useful for class use of the soundscape are:

1. For each environment, can you suggest what the noises you hear might represent?
2. Human ears can hear some sounds more easily than others. What kinds of sounds are easy to hear? What might be hard or even impossible to hear?
3. Across the whole soundscape, which is the noisiest living thing?
*Anthropogenic sound is an increasing environmental problem, and can create a lot of challenges for other creatures who also need sounding space to communicate and/or navigate.
4. Possibly, what can **you** do to rebalance making noise and listening?



Creation Celebration

9th May, 2026

Prayer of Preparation

Loving God, our Maker,
This is the time we call Eco Fest.
We think about our world –
we think of oceans and lakes and rivers,
of mountains and fields and gardens,
of animals and birds and insects,
of people of all kinds.
We think of our wonderful world
which is also your world –
the world you made,
the world you hold in your caring hands.
**Help us today to sing and share,
Help us today to listen and pray.
We are your people, you are our God,
come close to us as we come close to you.
Amen**



1. Sadness and Grief, Confession and Lament.

Jeremiah's Lament - *verses from The Book of Jeremiah chapter 4*

Song

Hear the song of our lament,
we grieve a dry and broken land;
hearts have turned from your intent
and earth is ravaged by our hand.

*Have mercy, have mercy,
have mercy on us, Lord.*

*Renew us, restore us,
have mercy on us Lord.*

Keiko Ying

2. Penitence.

Jeremiah's Warning - verses from Jeremiah chapter 4

Song

If the field are parched
and the trees are felled
will the rocks cry aloud on their own?
If the birds are starved
and the beasts are killed
will the bones in the dust lift a song?

*Have mercy Lord, have mercy, Lord,
forgive our broken ways.*

*Have mercy Lord, have mercy Lord,
renew the world you made.*

Chris Juby

Prayer of confession

Loving God, our Maker, you know us.

**You know that we can be loving and kind;
and you know that sometimes we get things wrong.
We are sorry that the way we live
is damaging your world,**

**causing changes to the earth's climate,
threatening the future of all living things.**

May God forgive us,
Jesus bless us,
and God's Spirit help us to grow in love. **Amen.**

3. Rest, Recover, Hope,

God's Promise to Noah – *verses from the Book of Genesis, chapters 8 and 9*

Prayer of Thanks

Song

As the seeds are planted,
let them yield a harvest,
when the crops are gathered:
let the earth find rest.

As the workers labour,
they deserve their wages,
let them feast with gladness:
let the earth find rest.

*Let the earth find rest as the Lord provides,
till the day of perfect peace;
for the Lord is good and his love endures
and his mercies never cease.*

When the wealthy prosper,
may their hearts be generous,
let them hate injustice:
let the earth find rest.

Chris Juby

4. Wonder at Creation

A Song of Amazement and Praise – *verses from Psalm 104*

Praying with our imagination

Song

The wind whispers softly and ocean waves roar;
See the birds as they dive, as they cry, as they soar.
Breeze on the seaside, footprints in sand;
Take in nature's wild beauty over this land.
Though flowers fade, they still bow down;
Trees reach the skies, yet still worship the One.

*Who made the stars, who painted the heavens,
who crafted the flowers with loving intention?
Ev'ry cry, ev'ry whisper, ev'ry call in the night
Is a symphony of worship, and a song taking flight!*

See the light breaking through towering trees;
Dawn is bursting to life, for God said "It is good."
Hear the sigh of leaves rustling in the calm after storm,
Rivers dancing down hillsides on this beautiful morn.
So quiet God made it, yet still it sings;
Be still and listen as it worships the King.

Who made the stars ...

Charis Yip

5. Praise and Thanksgiving

Moses' Stern Reminder – *verses from the Book of Deuteronomy chapter 8.*

Prayer of Praise

Song

Earth is full of wit and wisdom sounding God's delighted laugh.
From the tiny Highland midges* to the tree-top-tall giraffe,
All creation sings in wonder; even rocks and trees rejoice
as they join the ringing chorus: echoes of our Maker's voice.

Earth is full of wit and wisdom, woven into harmony.
Every creature has a purpose; every flower and bumblebee,
Spider, human, redwood, gecko, monkey, chicken, mouse and snake,
Live within a single fabric: cloth that only God could make.

Earth is full of wit and wisdom: penguin, platypus and snail,
Cactus, sea-slug, oak and algae, from the microbe to the whale.
In this great and strange creation, with a breath God gives us birth;
Born of soil to live as stewards, called to love and serve the earth.

Adam M. L. Tice

6. A Call to Change

Paul's words of encouragement, *verses from the Letter to the Romans chapter 8*

Prayer for God to change us

The response to 'O God' is '**hear our prayer**'.

Song

Open your ears, O faithful people,
open your ears and hear God's Word;
Open your ears, O faithful people,
God has come to you.

God has spoken words of wisdom, Hallelujah!
God has spoken to the people, Hallelujah!
God has spoken words of wisdom, Hallelujah!

They who have ears to hear the message,
They who have ears, now let them hear;
They who would learn the way of wisdom
Let them hear God's word.

God has spoken ...

Hasidic traditional

7. Blessing and Sending out

Prayer of blessing

Song

Oh the life of the world is a joy and a treasure
unfolding in beauty the green-growing tree,
the changing of seasons in mountain and valley
the stars and the bright restless sea.

Oh the life of the world is a fountain of goodness
overflowing in labour and passion and pain,
in the sound of the city and the silence of wisdom,
in the birth of a child once again.

Oh the life of the world is the source of our healing.
it rises in laughter and wells up in song;
it springs from the care of the poor and the broken
and refreshes where justice is strong.

So give thanks for the life and give love to the Maker
and rejoice in the gift of the bright risen Son.
and walk in the peace and the power of the Spirit
till the days of our living are done. *Kathy Galloway*

Prayer of sending out

**Let us go in peace
to love and serve our God,
sharing our hope and happiness
with everyone we meet,
in the name of Christ. Amen.**

Songs

Hear the song of our lament, Keiko Ying, Resound Worship, 2020

[https://www.resoundworship.org/song/hear the song of our lament](https://www.resoundworship.org/song/hear-the-song-of-our-lament)
CCL 7158764

If the fields are parched, Chris Juby, Resound Worship, 2020

<https://chrisjuby.com/songs/if-the-fields-are-parched/> CCL 7157374

As the seeds are planted, Chris Juby, Resound Worship, 2020

[https://www.resoundworship.org/song/as the seeds are planted let
the earth find rest](https://www.resoundworship.org/song/as-the-seeds-are-planted-let-the-earth-find-rest) CCL 7126824

Call of Creation, Charis Yip, 2025, CCL CC BY-NC-ND 4.0

To hear a performance of the song, please see:

https://soundcloud.com/charis_chords/call-of-creation

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/charis-y-206b7b355>

*Earth is full of wit and wisdom, words, Adam M L Tice, 2009;
traditional tune, Holy Manna*

*Open your ears, O Faithful People (God has spoken), words, Hasidic
trad, trans. Willard F Jabusch, 1966, arr. Robert Buckley Farlee,
Augsburg Fortress Publishers, Faith Alive Christian Resources.*

*Oh the life of the world, words by Kathy Galloway, tune Ian Galloway
arr. John Bell*

Celebrating Creation

Songsheet for Service 9th May 2026

Lament, Confess



Hear the song of our lament
We grieve a dry and broken land;
Hearts have turned from your intent
And earth is ravaged by our hand.
Have mercy, have mercy, have mercy on
us Lord; Renew us, restore use, have
mercy on us Lord.

Lament, Repent



Song 2: Verse

If the fields are parched and the trees
are felled, will the rocks cry aloud on
their own?

If the birds are starved and the beasts
are killed will the bones in the dust lift
a song?

Song 2: refrain

Have mercy, Lord, have mercy

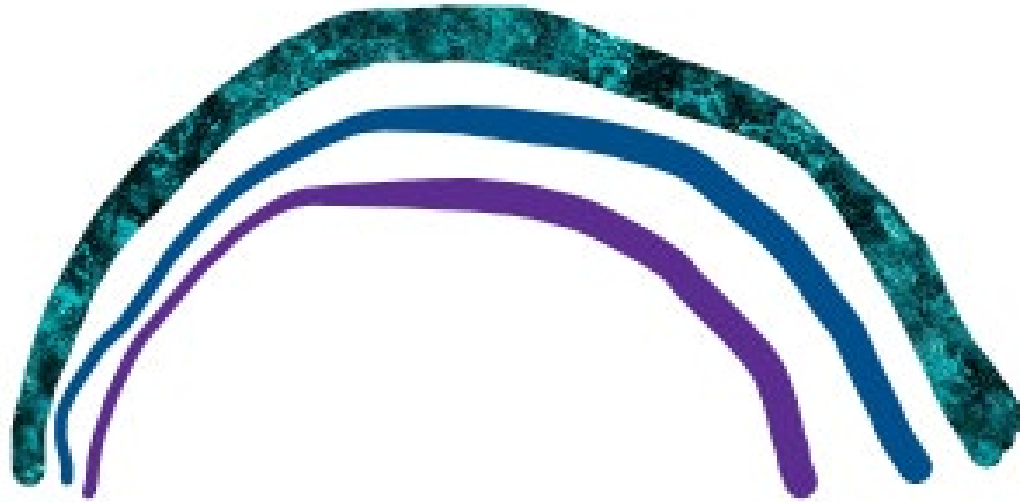
Lord;

Forgive our broken ways.

Have mercy, Lord, have mercy

Lord, renew the world you made.

Hope



Song 3/1

As the seeds are planted
Let them yield a harvest
When the crops are gathered,
Let the earth find rest.

Song 3/2

As the workers labour
They deserve their wages
let them feast with gladness,
Let the earth find rest.

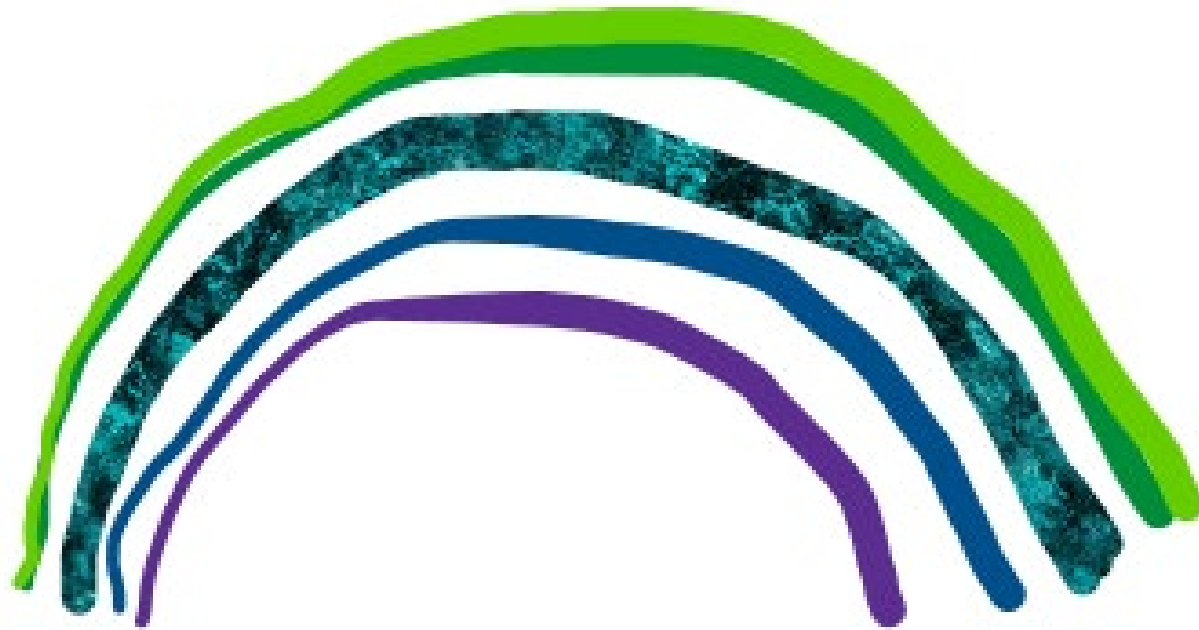
Song 3/bridge

Let the earth find rest as the
Lord provides
Till the day of perfect peace
For the Lord is good and his love
endures
And his mercies never cease.

Song 3/3

When the wealthy prosper
May their hearts be generous
Let them hate injustice
Let the earthy find rest.

Wonder



Song 4: Call of Creation/1

The wind whispers softly & oceans roar
See the birds as they dive, as they cry, as
they soar

Breeze on the seaside, footprints in the
sand

Take in nature's wild beauty over this
land

Song 4: Call of Creation/1b

Though flowers fade, they still bow down
Trees reach the skies, yet still worship the
One ..

Who made the stars, who painted the
heavens

Who crafted the flow'rs with loving
intention

Every cry, every whisper, every call in the
night

Is a symphony of worship, and a song
taking flight

See the light breaking through towering
trees

Dawn is bursting to life, for God said, "It is
good"

Hear the sigh of leaves rustling in the calm
after storm

Rivers dancing down hillsides on this
beautiful morn.

Song 4: Call of Creation/2b

So quiet God made it, yet still it sings;
Be still and listen as it worships the King

Who made the stars, who painted the
heavens

Who crafted the flow'rs with loving
intention

Every cry, every whisper, every call in the
night

Is a symphony of worship, and a song
taking flight

Praise and Thanksgiving



Earth is full of wit and wisdom
Sounding God's delighted laugh
From the tiny Highland midges
To the tree-top-tall giraffe
All creation sings in wonder
Even rocks and trees rejoice
As they join the ringing chorus
Echoes of our Maker's voice.

Earth is full of wit and wisdom
Woven into harmony
Every creature has a purpose
Every flower and bumblebee.
Spider, human, redwood, gecko
Monkey, chicken, mouse and snake,
Live within a single fabric;
Cloth that only God could make.

Earth is full of wit and wisdom
Penguin, platypus and snail,
Cactus, sea slug, oak and algae,
From the microbe to the whale.
In this great and strange creation,
With a breath God gives us birth;
Born of soil that holds and feeds us
Called to love and serve the earth.

Change



Open your ears, O faithful people,
Open your ears and hear God's word
Open your hearts, O faithful people
God has come to you.

God has spoken to the people,

Hal – le – lu – jah!

God has spoken words of wisdom,

Hal-le-lu-jah!

(x2)

They who have ears to hear the
message

They who have ears, now let them
hear.

They who would learn the way of
wisdom

Let them hear God's word.

God has spoken to the people,
Hal – le – lu – jah!

God has spoken words of wisdom,
Hal-le-lu-jah!

(x2)

Blessing: Celebrating the Gift of Creation



Oh the life of the world is a joy and a
treasure

Unfolding in beauty the green growing tree
The changing of seasons in mountain and
valley,

The starts and the bright restless sea.

Oh the life of the world is a fountain of
goodness.

Overflowing in labour and passion and
pain

In the sound of the city and the silence of
wisdom

In the birth of a child yet again.

Oh the life of the world is the source of our
healing

It rises in laughter and wells up in song;

It springs from the care of the poor and
the broken

And refreshes where justice is strong.

So give thanks for the life and give love to
the Maker,
And rejoice in the gift of the bright risen
Son,
And walk in the peace and the power of
the Spirit
Till the days of our living are done.

Study and Sing: Creation

Saturday 16th May 2026

Participant Resources



Laidlaw
Music Centre



Church Music
Scotland

RSOM
THE ROYAL SCHOOL OF CHURCH MUSIC

OVERVIEW

Scripture

Old Testament: God speaks creation into being, creation responds

Genesis 2:1-5 All created life comes from God; time to celebrate

Psalms 148 All creation praises God

New Testament Readings: Jesus Christ: God Incarnate, Living in Creation

Mark 4: 35-41 Jesus calms the storm

Romans 8:18-27 Creation Groans

Revelation 5:13-14 All living creatures worship the Lamb

Timetable:

9:30-10:00	Session 1: Welcome and Introduction: what is ecotheology? (with Dr Michael Lyons, School of Divinity)
10:00-10:40	Session 2: Signs of Life (Jane Pettegree) – warmups, using Luis Meseguer Mira 'Genesis'
10:40-11:00	<i>Short tea/coffee break</i>
11:00-12:15	Session 3: Music Theatre and Creation: Rivers of Life – learning 'Waiting for the Light to Shine' (*with recorded presentation from Professor Emeritus Ian Bradley)
12:15-13:00	Session 4: Creation in the Psalms: Diversity / Humanity's Place (psalms 8, 19, 104 & 148) (Jane Pettegree) – scripture priming for a listening exercise to take back to your congregations (Kirstin Spence) (and to try in your lunchbreak)
13:00-14:00	<i>Lunch – and own-time outdoor listening exercise</i>
14:00-15:00	Session 5: Creation in Contemporary Christian Worship – input from student research project new songs, lead sheets, and learning a new song inspired by the psalms by Charis Yip; further listening CCW suggestions prepared by Archie Moore
15:00-16:00	Session 6: Preparing to worship - music, readings, and thoughts
16:00-16:15	<i>Tea/coffee available</i>
16:30-17:30	Service of Worship. (Sermon: Rev Katrin Bosse)

Acknowledgements: Content for today has benefited from STARIS (St Andrews Research Internship Scheme), which supported three students (Archie Moore, Kirstin Spence and Charis Yip) in developing material on ecological listening and contemporary Christian worship music, including a new praise song by Charis. Our grateful thanks to all three for their input. We are also grateful to Luis Meseguer Mira (MLitt Sacred Music 2025) for a second new composition, a chant setting of Genesis 1. Composition is one way that humans can create in response to the Creator. School workshops in Dunblane this spring have also focussed on listening as a form of (re)creation, and we hope to share some sounds created by the children in tonight's service.

PART ONE: Study Day Session Notes

Session 1: Welcome and Introduction: What is Ecotheology?

Learning objective: introduction to what the Bible says about the place of humanity in creation, and why this might be hard to understand, and to outline how contemporary writing has responded to the challenge of contemporary environmental crisis.

Ecotheology Key Ideas

Creation is:

- A gift from God, intrinsically 'good' (as God declares Creation to be in Genesis)
- A source of divine revelation and encounter (can you think of examples?)
- An ongoing process which demands a reciprocal response in the form of responsible stewardship and cultivation
- Like ourselves, both flourishing and broken, undergoing constant pressures of breaking and renewal
- a theologically resonant way of thinking about 'nature', positioning humans as part of and not separate from this reality

The challenge: have Christians misunderstood our relationship with nature?

Lynne White. (1967) 'The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis' in *Science* 155(3767), pp.1203-1207 famously accused Christian teaching of contributing to humanity's exploitative attitude to our planet: modern science gives humans unprecedented technological power over nature. While many today do not believe in any God, modern western industrialised nations' patterns of exploitative behaviour have their roots in Christian ideas about humanity's "dominion" over all other creatures, a reading of Genesis 1 and 2 that sees humans as "not simply part of nature", but in some ways sharing "God's transcendence of nature" (p.1205). This, argued White, was distinctly different from beliefs that understood humans to be only one aspect of a natural world filled with sentient presences; in reacting strongly against pagan animism, did the Judao-Christian tradition damage our capacity to recognise the immanence of God in the created world?

White pointed out that in ancient times (when the Bible texts emerged) agricultural activity was based on local, family need: "formerly, man had been part of nature; now, he was the exploiter of nature" (p.1205); the long-term consequences of 'dominion' have encouraged us to be callous and disregarding of the inherent value of life, wherever it is found. Ideas that the created world is corrupt, fallen, and needing to be sloughed off

White also acknowledged that not only is the Bible a complex text, but that there were also historic Christian traditions of "reading" the nature as another kind of divine 'text'

evidencing the active, ongoing, life-giving properties of God, and recommended remembering these.

Since White wrote this article, many other writers have contributed their thoughts to how Christian communities might learn to value nature and to recalibrate humanity's place, with due humility, as one creature amongst many creatures, using our technology and power more responsibly, with new ways of reading scripture.

Selected Further Reading

Richard Bauckham, *Bible and Ecology: Rediscovering the Community of Creation* (Longman & Todd, 201) – widening ideas of stewardship beyond exploitative interpretations of dominion, and thinking about “the steward’s responsibility to God” (p.1). God’s gift to humans in Genesis 1:26-28 needs to understand our responsibility to share the vision that God has, that creation is ‘good’, and to make time to help ensure that it keeps so. Job 38-41 shows us that we, too, are subjected to nature; the psalms (e.g. 104 and 148) position humans as part of a shared community of created things. Even eschatology (the theology of end-things) does not simply “cast off” creation: the New Jerusalem is a restored garden, “it lives from the vitality of the natural world without plundering and exhausting its resources” (p,176)

Jeremy Begbie, *Voicing Creation’s Praise: Towards a Theology of the Arts* (London: Continuum, 1991), argues that art makes us aware of the beauty in the world (p.209) and has a redemptive responsibility “to renew and recreate” (p.212).

Ian Bradley, *God is Green: Christianity and the Environment* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2020) – highlighted as an introductory text, that summarises for the general reader a lot of current writing on this topic. Particularly useful in describing the Eastern Orthodox idea of the ‘Cosmic Christ’ (chapter 4), who sanctifies (redeems) all creation through his death and resurrection. The world, through Christ, is sacred rather than profane (p,108).

Melissa J Brotton (ed.), *Ecotheology in the Humanities: an interdisciplinary approach to understanding the divine and nature* (Lexington Books, 2016) within which a) Ginger Hanks Harwood highlights Biblical instances where humanity has a responsibility to other creatures – as Jesus says in Matthew 10:29-31 God has concern for the fall of a sparrow; b) Ellen Bernstein discusses the Hebrew words for ‘land’ which connects to earth (from which we all come) and ‘home’. Our possession of land is conditional on our duties to God and to other creatures, calling for reciprocation and gratitude; c) Davide Kendall (‘all nature sings, and around me rings the music of the spheres’) considers traditions of ‘harmony’ underlying medieval ideas about the function and symbolism of music.

Pope Francis, *Laudate Si (Praise be to you)* (Vatican, 2015) – drawing on traditions such as St Francis of Assisi’s 13th century Canticle of the Sun praising God as Creator, this encyclical has found a worldwide ecumenical readership, and urges humanity collectively to take action to curb irresponsible economic development in the face of environmental damage and global warming -

https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html

Alexander J B Hampton & Douglas Hedley (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Christianity and the Environment* (Cambridge University Press, 2022) within which Jörg Lauster writes about traditions of 'enchanted' nature, that consider God's immanence in the material world giving this intrinsic value; Charles Taliaferro considering scripture teaching about caring for animals; Robin Attfield considering a theocentric idea of creation, that creation exists to glorify God; Jacob Holsinger Sherman on pre-modern understanding of 'the book of nature' as a pathway to knowing God, continuing in traditions of e.g. transcendentalism, and romantic ideas about nature as spiritually revelatory. Emily Brady's chapter on 'the sublime and wonder' suggests attitudes of outward-directed attention given to creation that form a kind of reciprocity to God's gift: "the state of wonder is one of rapt attentiveness" (p.229). Michael S Northcott discusses anthropologists' awareness of indigenous traditions which understand humanity as being within, rather than separate from and above, the created world.

David G Horrell, *The Bible and the Environment: Towards a Critical Ecological Biblical Theology* (Equinox, 2010) – opens with 'Earth Bible' project principles, that the created world has intrinsic worth, all things are interconnected and mutually dependent, the earth may speak both against injustice and to celebrate, we are partners not rules (p.13). Examines both OT and NT teaching on creation, pointing out that the OT has more explicit teaching on humanity's place within a wider creation, and that it is less straightforward to find these messages in the NT, which is more orientated towards human experience. The Bible, therefore, isn't a simple textbook on environmental curation; reading the Bible puts us in dialogue with other forms of human knowledge and experience (p.122). One response to God's self-emptying of himself in the gift of Jesus, born in to the world, is to recognise we too should self-limit, give rather than simply take (p.140).

Sallie McFague, *The Body of God: An Ecological Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), informed by feminist ideas of resistance to traditional ideas of dominion, this book suggests the radical idea that the created world is God's 'body', that God is the breath of life for all its constituent parts (p.133), and that our own embodied experience is necessarily our way to "know" God. She urges the recovery of 'wonder' for nature, (p.122) and sympathy for other creatures (p.121).

Session 2. Signs of Life

Breathing is (for animals, including humans, at least) a universal sign of life, and a prerequisite for singing.

- Genesis 2:7 God ‘breathed’ into the first human “the breath of life, and the man became a living being”
- Psalm 150:6 “Let everything that has breath praise the Lord”
- 2 Timothy 3:16 “all Scripture is God-breathed”

Learning objective: to use 2 pieces of music with creation-focussed texts to think about how we use our breath, and our bodies, to sing.

- **Luis Meseguer Mira** is a young composer from Spain who graduated with an MLitt in Sacred Music in 2025, and whose compositions include a significant commission. He also runs a magazine on sacred art, *Transfiguration*. His music combines older sacred music traditions with newer sonorities. See his website: <https://www.luismeseguer.com/>

We will be using a new composition by him, setting the opening of Genesis 1 as a responsorial (solo chant plus repeating choral refrain). This is an ancient method of shaping liturgical chant.

Luis writes: “In this piece, ‘Genesis 1’, I meditate on the biblical texts of Creation. There is a sense of regularity, of cosmic order, in the repetition of structures and phrases such as ‘and God saw it was good’. More than a succession of biological events, it is a revelation of the beautiful patterns that underpin nature.

Just as the Lord spoke to the wind and the waters, I hope that the singers and listeners of this piece can enter into this dialogue with nature, the living imprint of our wonderful Creator.”

We will finish our service tonight with this piece, as a preparation for the sabbath moment of rest and contemplation.

Luis has chosen to set Genesis 1. There are two versions of the Creation story in the Bible. Genesis 1 is the 7-day, orderly version, marked by rhetorical repetition and a God’s-eye view of events unfolding over time (God sees creation, that it is good; humans are created in the image of God). The idea of human’s having ‘dominion’ or rule over creation emerges from a coming-into-consciousness of the created – us – of the ability to continue the work of (re)creation. The question this opens up, for modern Christians, is what does ‘dominion’ mean? For the agriculturalists of ancient Israel, growing crops and managing the land and livestock were forms of ‘dominion’ that needed to work alongside natural processes of regeneration and regrowth. For

modern, technologically enhanced, humans, how can we still retain that sympathetic relationship with the rest of creation? Genesis 1 also helps us to understand that we need to set aside time – Sabbath – just as God did, to notice and appreciate the ‘goodness’ of Creation.

Genesis 2, which may have been written later than Genesis 1, has a perspective that is shaped by a more human perspective; where did WE start, and what is our relationship with each other and with God?

Session 3. Music Theatre and Creation: Rivers of Life (With input from: Emeritus Professor Ian Bradley)

Session Format: pre-recorded presentation(s) from Professor Bradley on some music theatre pieces, with practical opportunities to sing some songs.

Aim for this session: to explore how compositions made for secular contexts may have implications that are useful for bringing us into a worshipful attitude to God in the fullness of Creation.

Ian Bradley’s latest book on the theological ideas resonating in music theatre and operetta (see further reading) builds on many years of teaching a course on this topic at honours level for the School of Divinity. He argues that although Offenbach, Léhar, Gilbert and Sullivan, Rogers and Hammerstein, Sondheim, etc were composing for secular audiences, and were themselves often not from Christian backgrounds, that their works nevertheless draw on religious ideas in ways that can help listeners to think about these in the contexts of their own lives. In that book, the *Lion King* is particularly highlighted as addressing our relationship with creation, and we will be looking at ‘The Circle of Life’ from that work.

Extending outwards in today’s workshop will be discussion of a work not covered in that book: Roger Miller’s *Big River* (1984/5), based on Mark Twain’s 1884 novel *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. This musical won 7 Tony Awards, including Best Musical, in the year it opened.

In *Huckleberry Finn*, Mark Twain tells the story of Jim, who is escaping from enslavement, and Huckleberry, the poor white boy running away from an abusive father. Twain’s criticism of small town slave-state Christian cultures which promoted good manners before spiritual insight frames much of the narrative. Jim and Huckleberry encounter many characters who are able to exploit surface appearances of respectability to hide behaviours which the reader can understand to be deeply problematic. However, riding a raft down the Mississippi River towards its branch with the Ohio river, a route to the free north, Huckleberry learns through his encounter with both the beauty and the danger of the natural world that he and Jim are just the same, two friends. Nature frames a journey that shows us the common connections between humans as creatures in creation.

Songs relevant to Huck's journey that draw on metaphors of light and moral transformation include: 'I see the same stars through my window as you see through yours' (a duet between Huck and Jim); 'Did the morning come too early' (a trio between 3 good people, Huck, Jim and Mary Jane). The song we will learn today is sung by Huckleberry Finn, longing for change in his life: '**Waiting for the Light to Shine**'. Light, as we learn from this book, is both a natural phenomenon and a spiritual imperative.

We may also take a brief excursion on *Show Boat* (1927) ('Ol' Man River), by Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein, which draws on the perennial metaphor of the river of life, another nature metaphor that is powerfully resonant in the Gospel music community. While the Black American experience of rivers as routes to freedom is far from our own history in Scotland, we can at least remember how other communities experiencing great suffering and injustice are able to relate scriptural teaching to the natural world that frames their reality, and perhaps learn something about our shared position in our journey through the created world.

Further Reading and Listening

- Ian Bradley, *Music of the Night: Religious Influences and Spiritual Resonances in Operetta and Music Theatre* (OUP, 2025)
- Roger Miller, *Big River*, production by American Music Theatre of San Jose (1990) currently at time of writing on Youtube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YwcvShqLOM8>
- Jeanne Campbell Reesman, 'Mark Twain vs God: The Story of a Relationship', *Mark Twain Journal* 52(2) (2014), pp.112-135
- Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884) – many editions!

Session 4. Creation in the Psalms / Environmental Listening

Aim for this session: to explore how the psalms both praise God's presence in and over all Creation, encouraging wonder in the face of creation; to explore the crux of humanity's place in creation using a practical worksheet, additional copies available for you to take home to your own congregations;

The psalms have been a recurring interest of these St Andrews 'Study and Sing' days, and many have imagery and experiential knowledge drawn from nature. Here we look at psalms (particularly 8, 104, 148) that speak of the relationship between Creation and the Creator.

- **Psalm 8** – opens by praising God's name, and that the heavens in all their glory show forth God's power. It continues by reflecting that humans are 'a little lower than the angels' (vs 5), and that they share something of God's power over nature. We might want to think about what these verses mean:

6-8 You made them rulers over the works of your hands; you put everything under their feet: all flocks and herds, and the animals of the wild, the birds in the sky, and the fish in the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas.

Song: John Barnard, 'God is the king of all the earth' (from psalm 47), in *Songs, Psalms and Spirituals* ed. John Barnard & David Iliff (RSCM, 2011) – consider lyrics / word choice.

- **Psalm 104** – this psalm lists all the marvellously diverse ways in which God is known through creation, in its light, winds, waters, and all forms of life. All creatures – including humans – owe their being to God, the source of all breath and life. Our response is not simply to 'rule' creation, but to spend a lifetime singing praises.
- **Psalm 148** – one of the final sequence of psalms that instruct us to respond to the gift of life by singing, but which extends the idea of praise to include all of creation. This is not simply 'personification' – the attribution of human qualities to non-human things. This is a theological statement that in their being, all created things praise God; our uniquely human response is to be self-consciously aware of the act of praising.

In their enumeration of created things, the psalms are behaving like responsible ecologists: we cannot value what we cannot name.

Take time to pay attention and notice what you hear sounding – this is where praise begins.

The worksheet that accompanies this session was designed by Kirstin Spence, a 4th year Geography student who has also worked on producing training material on listening

connected with environmental fieldwork (see further reading below). The worksheet was prepared thanks to Kirstin's undertaking a STARIS (St Andrews Research Internship Scheme) on Environmental Listening and Ecotheology in autumn 2025. Please take it into the gardens around the Laidlaw Music Centre during your lunchbreak. Take a few minutes, please, to use this for active listening; think about how what you hear echoes what the psalmist describes.

Kirstin writes: "Sound is often an overlooked way of engaging with biodiversity. For environmental scientists, acoustic monitoring provides an opportunity for non-invasive and continuous monitoring of wildlife and offers an alternative mode of species identification which may be needed in dense or hard-to-access environments. In addition, changes in the soundscape can provide an early warning of ecological stress: audio clips have already revealed patterns of species loss and environmental degradation linked to human activity through comparing recordings taken years apart. While listening is often viewed as a passive act, active listening is a skill that must be developed. Listening with purpose allows individuals to be able to connect with nature's soundscape and process the different sounds in a way that deepens their understanding of the world around them.

This task has been created to help participants slow down and retune their senses to the natural world around them which is so often overlooked and prompt them to think about how faith can help us see nature not as background scenery but instead as part of a living, sacred whole. We hope that in a world where people are engaging with nature less and less, or blocking out the natural soundscape by wearing headphones even when they are in nature, this task will help them reconnect with the natural world and foster a stronger drive to protect the environment."

Further Reading and Listening

- Kirstin Spence, 'An Ecological Sound Education: Listening for Biodiversity', on BIRCH (Biodiversity Interdisciplinary Research Community Hub), University of St Andrews 2024, <https://birch.wp.st-andrews.ac.uk/projects/an-ecological-sound-education-listening-for-biodiversity/>

Session 5: Creation in Contemporary Christian Worship

Aims of this session: to explore new contemporary Christian worship new songs that respond to God's creation, and which also reflect the challenges of the modern world's encounter with creation.

Contemporary praise songs can present traditional congregations with challenges because the accompaniment often uses guitar tab rather than treble/bass clef keyboard notation. Learning these often relies as much on aural memory – e.g. listening to others perform them, or to recordings – instead of 'reading' music. Since today's theme has been 'listening', it is worth thinking about what learning through listening gives us.

Contemporary praise songs are much more varied in style and content than simply being 'pop' songs – although music leadership may rely more on a small group or even single musician (singer/guitarist) than the more corporate 'choir' found in the traditional church.

What are the advantages of this kind of music in worship?

What might be the challenges?

It's worth noting that 'taste' in these matters has a lot to do with local cultures and traditions; churches with a wide range of ages, or with a significant mix of people from different cultures, may need to consider whether contemporary songs might sound and feel more accessible to some in the congregation. We may need to learn to listen to each other – to learn new ways of singing, alongside the older songs.

Songs (see music appendix):

- **Charis Yip, 'Call of Creation' (St Andrews, 2025).** Charis is a second year Psychology student from Hong Kong, who is also an experienced leader of praise songs in her church community. She currently worships with the St Andrews Vineyard church, and also worked on this during the STARIS (St Andrews Research Internship Scheme) on Environmental Listening and Ecotheology. Both tune and words are newly composed.
- **Keith Getty, Stuart Townend, and Kirstyn Getty, "Creation Sings the Father's Song" (2008).** This song was highlighted by Archie Moore, the third student who worked on the STARIS project, whose task was to draw up a playlist of additional contemporary songs on creation. See the Further Reading and Listening list below.
- **John Bell, "Because", (2025) (tune: Porque, Central America)** - a new ecumenical hymn written to mark the 60th Anniversary of the Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund. Bell (and our own Ian Bradley) were part of the committee that curated CH4, the Church of Scotland hymnal issued in 2005, which included a whole section of material on creation. Discussion about this hymnal often reflects divided opinions – it isn't easy to find contemporary material that suits all tastes and withstands the test of time. However, there is much to admire about the impulses to search out and highlight music that engaged with the idea of creation and our response to this

gift. John Bell is known for setting new words to traditional tunes – often Scottish. Here, an international theme – environmental crisis – encourages use of a tune from Central America.

While today's workshop has emphasised songs of praise for creation, we include a moment to reflect on the complementary side of the story: one of lamentation for the damage humans have done to creation by not respecting and valuing what we have been given to care for.

We will be singing in worship at the end of today a traditional hymn – “All Creatures of Our God and King” (tune: Lasst uns erfreuen) – which continues the theme of praise. The words, translated by William Draper (1855-1933), are based on a 13th century ‘song of the sun’ created by the St Francis of Assisi, reflecting St Francis’s belief that that God was imminent in and manifested by nature. Archie Moore draws our attention to a contemporary version of this, with changed words: “All Creatures Lament” by The Porter’s Gate (2022), uses the same tune to lift up “anguished prayers and pleas” amidst the climate crisis (see further listening).

Prayers this evening will invite reflection on both praise and laments.



Further Listening : Contemporary Christian Worship

Researched and compiled by: Archie Moore, 4th Year MTheology

- Across the Lands, Keith & Kristyn Getty, 2006, Worship Together (CCLI - 3709898)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mVpkR4gYTlg&list=RDmVpkR4gYTlg&start_radio=1
This song encourages us to listen for God’s cry of love ringing out across the whole world, reminding us that all creation holds together by the power of His voice.
- All Creatures (Sing the Harmony), Davy Flowers and Shane & Shane, 2023, Essential Music (CCLI - 7216561)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WavyQXLeehM&list=RDWavyQXLeehM&start_radio=1
A contemporary twist on a classic hymn, this song reminds us of nature’s power to praise God, with the modern refrain imploring everyone and everything in the natural world to sing in harmony, praising our creator.
- All Creatures Lament, The Porter’s Gate, 2022, Integrated Music Rights (CCLI – Unknown)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=99Rbgy1xb_Q&list=RD99Rbgy1xb_Q&start_radio=1
Set to the tune of “All Creatures of Our God and King” (Lasst Uns Erfreuen), this song takes a different approach towards creation singing to God, focusing on nature’s cry of lament, lifting up “anguished prayers and pleas” amidst the climate crisis.
- Brother Sun (Giving Glory), The Porter’s Gate & Liz Vice, 2022, Integrated Music Rights (CCLI - Unknown)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vbLI_8kTyPY&list=RDvbLI_8kTyPY&start_radio=1
This song highlights the role of the sun, moon, wind and rain of serenading their maker.

- Cannons, Phil Wickham, 2007, Music Services (CCLI - 5124055)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e0YiRav-Gn4&list=RDe0YiRav-Gn4&start_radio=1
 This song encourages us to listen for “the music of the universe”, which can be heard in the clouds, thunder, rain, skies, moon and stars and to join in with this song of praise that reaches far beyond our galaxy.
- Christ Be Magnified, Cody Carnes, 2019, Capitol CMG (CCLI - 7139866)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jjGMIYywK9M&list=RDjjGMIYywK9M&start_radio=1
 This song reminds us that the “inmost melody” and “native cry” of every creature and all creation is to magnify Christ.
- *Creation Sings the Father’s Song, Keith and Kristyn Getty, 2008, Capitol GMG (CCLI - 5333798)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gkvQsz7_Ui8&list=RDgkvQsz7_Ui8&start_radio=1
 This song reflects on all of creation, both human and non-human, filling the earth with sounds of worship to God.
- Creation Song (Glory to the Lamb), Fernando Ortega, 1998, Word Entertainment (CCLI -Unknown)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wjtzPZ6sMSw&list=RDwjtzPZ6sMSw&start_radio=1
 This song encourages us to listen to creation and join in with its praise to God.
- Creation Song, Josh Garrels, 2020, Wings Music Group (CCLI - Unknown)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rgXR7dU_0CQ&list=RDrgXR7dU_0CQ&start_radio=1
 This song encourages us to reflect on both creation’s groaning and worship of God and declare alongside it that He is the source of life and love.
- The First Hymn, Chris Tomlin & Ben Fielding, 2025, Capitol CMG (CCLI - 7257025)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qTyJu9lyVkl&list=RDqTyJu9lyVkl&start_radio=1
 This song encourages all of creation to be silent in awe and reverence to God, before crying out in worship and praise.
- Great are You Lord, All Sons and Daughters, 2013, Essential Music Publishing (CCLI - 6460220)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hpb02shcAis&list=RDhpb02shcAis&start_radio=1
 This song reminds us that even the breath in our lungs belongs to God, so we should praise Him in response to that gift. The bridge envisions the whole earth shouting God’s praise.
- He Reigns, Newsboys, 2003, Worship Together (CCLI - 4026635)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V8By6xPXnSQ&list=RDV8By6xPXnSQ&start_radio=1
 This song takes us on a global tour of hearing God’s praises, from the African plain to the Amazon rain, from a thousand steeple bells to underground churches, as all creation joins united in singing “a love song born of a grateful choir.”
- How Great Thou Art, Celtic Worship, 2019, Oak Ridge Records (CCLI - 14181)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uKGf06YM7rQ&list=RDuKGf06YM7rQ&start_radio=1
 This modern arrangement of an ancient hymn encourages us to listen to the majestic

sounds of nature, from the rolling thunder to the gentle birdsong, and for our soul to respond with song.

- **Indescribable**, Chris Tomlin, 2004, Capitol (CCLI - 4403076)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5lIVfkY5q54&list=RD5lIVfkY5q54&start_radio=1

This song reminds us that planets, colours, smells and even the unique sounds of animals, reveal God's glory and majesty, and His creation is often beyond words.

- *** Let All Creation Sing**, Resound worship, 2020, Integrity's Alleluia! Music (CCLI - 7158792)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZeCJjiMYR74&list=RDZeCJjiMYR74&start_radio=1

From armadillos to supernovas, this song reminds us to listen to nature's proclamation of God's glory.

- **No One But You**, Hillsong Worship, 2019, Hillsong Music (CCLI - 7135000)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rOPqG6FkV1c&list=RDOPqG6FkV1c&start_radio=1

The bridge of this song encourages us to listen to the oceans, skies, rocks and mountains as they cry out in praise to God.

- **One and Only**, Rend Collective, 2015, Capitol (CCLI - 7047085)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PX0QQmSKA8g&list=RDPX0QQmSKA8g&start_radio=1

This song reminds us of the power of speech within creation – a God who spoke to teach the sun to rise, whose lips proclaimed the birth of light, who sang as planets learned their dance and whose breath awakened life from dust, showing the natural world is filled with God's voice.

- **Shout to the Lord**, Hillsong Worship, 1993, Hillsong Music (CCLI - 1406918)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5_alauL2xKA&list=RD5_alauL2xKA&start_radio=1

This song implores all the Earth to use every breath to raise our voices and shout and sing to the Lord, joining in with the worship of the mountains and seas.

- **So Will I (100 Billion X)**, Hillsong United, 2017, Hillsong Music (CCLI - 7084123)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GfVd5x9W1Xc&list=RDGfVd5x9W1Xc&start_radio=1

From the roaring oceans proclaiming God's greatness to the rocks crying out in silence, all nature finds its life and being in God's creative speech, and this song encourages us to join in with nature's praise to our life-giving Lord.

- *** This Is My Father's World** (with Runkerry Reel), Keith & Kristyn Getty, 2018, Getty Music (CCLI - 7064071)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NwqTvmprKeE&list=RDNwqTvmprKeE&start_radio=1

This song reminds us of the beauty and presence of God within nature, encouraging us to listen to the songs of the birds, lilies, grass and the heavens, all ringing out in God's praise.

- **A Thousand Hallelujahs**, Brooke Ligertwood, 2022, Essential Music (CCLI - 7190270)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vR_sl9lkowA&list=RDvR_sl9lkowA&start_radio=1

The first verse of this song reminds us of creation's praise to God, and the privilege it is to be able to join in with that.

- What I was Made For, Rend Collective, 2024, Capitol (CCLI - 7246087)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6kC-4PrB0n8&list=RD6kC-4PrB0n8&start_radio=1

This song reminds us that every cell and atom of our being is called to share in God's glory and praise. We were made to use our breath to worship, joining in with 'creation and the chorus of the stars.'

- With the Wonder, Rich Mullins, 1988, Reunion records (CCLI - 2088824)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7LR3pUt010&list=RD7LR3pUt010&start_radio=1

This song encourages us to use all our senses to recognise the divine spark within all the wonders of the world.

- Yahweh, Rend Collective, 2018, Capitol (CCLI – 7051509)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qd7R1H79Vok&list=RDqd7R1H79Vok&start_radio=1

This song reminds us of God's breath as the source of life and encourages us to breathe in God's life and then use that breath to sing to Him.

For a longer Spotify playlist, scan this QR code:



*** RECOMMENDED HIGHLIGHTS:** "CREATION SINGS THE FATHER'S SONG" (GETTY), "INDESCRIBABLE" (TOMLIN), "THIS IS MY FATHER'S WORLD" (GETTY), AND "LET ALL CREATION SING" (RESOUND WORSHIP).

ARCHIE ALSO SUGGESTS: "AN INTERESTING POINT OF COMPARISON CAN BE FOUND BETWEEN THE HYMN "ALL CREATURES OF OUR GOD AND KING" AND THE SONG "ALL CREATURES LAMENT" BY THE PORTER'S GATE. BOTH SONGS USE THE SAME, TRADITIONAL, HYMN MELODY. HOWEVER, THE PORTER'S GATE VERSION ASKS US TO THINK DIFFERENTLY ABOUT WHAT IT MEANS FOR CREATION TO CRY OUT."

THE PORTER'S GATE IS AN ECUMENICAL ARTS COLLECTIVE, FOUNDED BY ISAAC WARDELL IN VIRGINIA. EVENTS AND ALBUMS HAVE BEEN PRODUCED IN MANY DIFFERENT NORTH AMERICAN LOCATIONS, AND AIM TO WELCOME PEOPLE INTO CHRISTIAN WORSHIP WHO MIGHT NOT BE THERE ALREADY. THEIR 2022 ALBUM 'CLIMATE VIGIL SONGS' IS PARTICULARLY RELEVANT TO TODAY'S TOPIC

- CLIMATE VIGIL SONGS - FREE WORSHIP GUIDE AVAILABLE HERE:
<https://umcreationjustice.org/project/worship-guide-climate-vigil-songs/>
- LEAD SHEETS FOR SONGS FROM THIS ALBUM CAN BE DOWNLOADED FREE FROM HERE:
<https://www.dropbox.com/SCL/FO/XPJNFM2VIAWG3Q3OGCNX/AGHLHqZSzo-FJT-IYLY2Prc?e=1&fbclid=IwAR3tZpJRHOEIYer4LNE8QIJv824JD0EgDBJcPHTZLUdZM89UQOYcc7SZx8&rlkey=GU4ACSR4LOBYR16ZRM3Z6LRTR&dl=0>
- THE SPOTIFY LINK TO CLIMATE VIGIL SONGS IS :
<https://open.spotify.com/album/3AMGPJxPYVZrmKTtBY1m2X>

Session 6: Preparing to Worship

This final hour will run through the music in order for tonight, adding in:

- CH4 #140 'Lord, your hands have formed this world' (tune 'Gayon ni Higami', traditional melody from the Philippines, words by Ramon and Sario Oliano)
- CH4 #147 All Creatures of Our God and King (tune: 'Lasst uns Erfreuen', let us rejoice heartily, first published in *Auserlesene, Catholische Gestiche Kirchengesäng* (1623))

Final thoughts – please take a moment to complete a short survey asking you what you think about what we have shared today; there will be a box in the Music Centre reception and at the back of the church for completed returns, and your thoughts will help with a research project on listening, music and ecotheology. Thank you!

A Service of Renewal and Thanksgiving for God's Creation



**Saturday 16th May 2026,
4.30pm**

St Andrew's Episcopal Church, Queens Terrace

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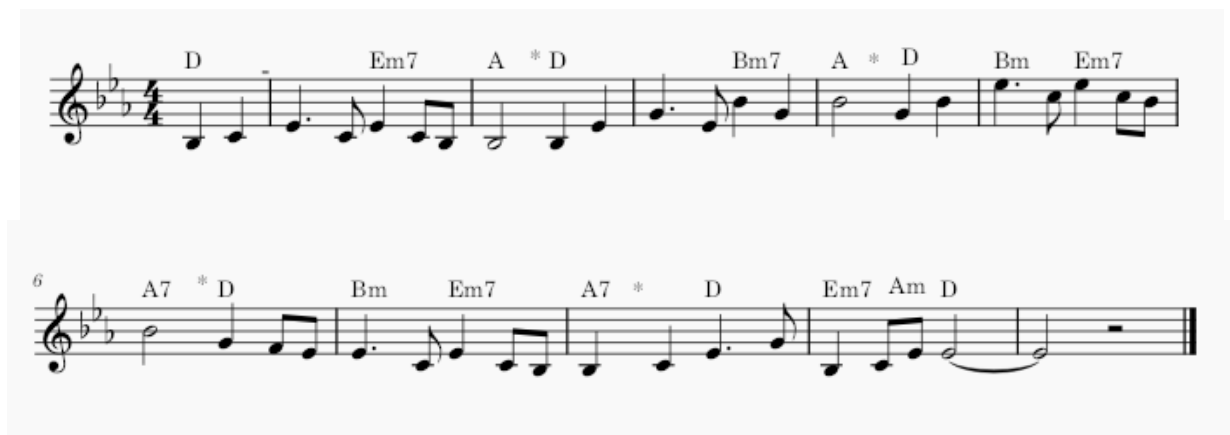
*BEFORE THE SERVICE: Soundscape composition,
from Primary Schools participating in Dunblane Ecofestival, 2026*

1. Welcome and opening prayer

2. Introit: “Waiting for the Light to Shine” (Roger Miller, from *Big River*, 1985)

3. READING: OLD TESTAMENT Genesis 2:1-7

Hymn Response: CH4 #140 **Lord, your hands have formed this world** (tune “Gayon ni Higami”, traditional melody from the Philippines, words by Ramon and Sario Oliano, trans Minchin and Rice, arr. John Bell)



1. Lord, your hands have formed this world,
Every part is shaped by you,
Water tumbling over rocks,
Air and sunlight: each day's signs
That you make all things new.

2. Yours the soil that holds the seed,
You give warmth and moisture too,
Sprouting blossoms, crops and buds,
Trees and plants; the season's signs
That you make all things new.

3. Like a mat you roll our land
Space to build, for us and you,
Earthly homes, and better still,
Homes for Christ; the truest sign
That you make all things new.

4. READING: PSALM 148 – *to be spoken together alternating North / South of church from verse 2-14*

**ALL: Praise the Lord; Praise the Lord
from the heavens; praise him in the
heights above.**

2 Praise him, all his angels;
praise him, all his heavenly hosts.

8 lightning and hail, snow and clouds,
stormy winds that do his bidding,

3 Praise him, sun and moon;
praise him, all you shining stars.

9 you mountains and all hills,
fruit trees and all cedars,

4 Praise him, you highest heavens
and you waters above the skies.

10 wild animals and all cattle,
small creatures and flying birds,

5 Let them praise the name of the
Lord, for at his command they were
created,

11 kings of the earth and all nations,
you princes and all rulers on earth,

6 and he established them for ever
and ever— he issued a decree that
will never pass away.

12 young men and women,
old men and children.

7 Praise the Lord from the earth,
you great sea creatures and all
ocean depths,

13 Let them praise the name of the
Lord, for his name alone is exalted;
his splendour is above the earth and
the heavens.

14 And he has raised up for his
people a horn, the praise of all his
faithful servants, of Israel, the people
close to his heart.

ALL: PRAISE THE LORD

5. **READING:** Romans 8:18-27

Hymn Response: “Creation Sings the Father’s Song”, Keith Getty, Stuart Townend, Kristyn Getty (from www.gettymusic.com)

1. Creation sings the Father's song
He calls the sun to wake the dawn
And run the course of day
Till evening falls in crimson rays
His fingerprints in flakes of snow
His breath upon this spinning globe
He charts the eagle's flight
Commands the newborn baby's cry

REFRAIN: *Hallelujah!*

*Let all creation stand and sing
Hallelujah!*

*Fill the earth with songs of worship
Tell the wonders of creation's King*

2. Creation gazed upon His face
The ageless One in time's embrace
Unveiled the Father's plan
Of reconciling God and man
A second Adam walked the earth
Whose blameless life would break
the curse
Whose death would set us free
To live with Him eternally

[REFRAIN] *Hallelujah!*

3. Creation longs for His return
When Christ shall reign upon the
earth
The bitter wars that rage
Are birth pains of a coming age
When He renews the land and sky
All heav'n will sing and earth reply
With one resplendent theme
The glories of our God and King

[REFRAIN] *Hallelujah! ...*

6. **READING:** Gospel: Mark 4: 35-41 Jesus calms the storm

Hymn response: “Because”, John Bell. The Iona Community (2025) (tune: Porque, Central America). A new ecumenical hymn written to mark the 60th Anniversary of the Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund

1. Because the rivers do not drink their water
Because the fruit trees don't devour their crop
Because the sun gives light to all creation,
The endless greed of humans has to stop.
For nature shows how we should live for others
Forgo possessiveness and learn to share
And in a deep commitment to the planet,
Reflect God's generosity and care.

2. Because the world with purpose and with beauty
Produces daily liturgy for God
We have no right to sabotage the pleasure
Of nature off'ring worship to its Lord.
Instead we should seek harmony with nature
Become the willing servants of the earth.
Enabling it to fertilise and flourish,
Forever bringing life and hope to birth.

3. Because the world was living long before us
And poses no threat to humanity;
Because its health and beauty can restore us,
We must respect its great integrity.
So let us work to guarantee all people
Have food and freedom, health and happiness,
By sharing all the good that God has given
With all the faith and justice we profess.

4. Praise to the Lord and lover of creation,
Praise to the Son in whom all life is bound,
Praise to the ever active Holy Spirit,
One God, whose gifted world is common ground.

7. **HOMILY:** reflecting on musical responses to creation.

Hymn Response: Charis Yip, 'Call of Creation', composed St Andrews, 2025

1. The wind whispers softly and ocean waves roar!
See the birds as they dive, as they cry, as they soar;
Breeze on the seaside, footprints in sand;
Take in nature's wild beauty over this land.
Though flowers fade, they still bow down;
Trees reach the skies, yet still worship to the One

Refrain:

*Who made the stars, who painted the heavens,
Who crafted the flowers with loving intention!
Ev'ry cry, ev'ry whisper, ev'ry call in the night
Is a symphony of worship, and a song taking flight!*

2. See the light breaking through towering trees;
Dawn is bursting to life, for He said, 'It is good.'
Hear the sigh of leaves rustling in the calm after storm,
Rivers dancing down hillsides on this beautiful morn.
So quiet He made it, yet still it sings;
Be still and listen as it worships the King.

Refrain. *Who made the stars ...*

8. **Intercessions**

Ending with...

Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, in earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen

9. **Hymn: All Creatures of Our God and King** (tune: Lasst uns Erfreuen, let us rejoice heartily, from a Lutheran hymn which appeared in *Auserlesene, Catholische Gestiche Kirchengesäng* (Cologne, 1623) arr. Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958) for the *English Hymnal* of 1906. These words are a translation made in 1919 by William Henry Draper of St Francis of Assisi 'Canticle of the Sun'.

Unison

Harmony

Unison

Refrain: Harmony

O — praise him, O — praise him, al - le -

Unison

- lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, — al - le - lu - - - ia !

1. All creatures of our God and King
Lift up your voice and with us sing
Alleluia, Alleluia!
Bright brother sun with golden beam
Clear sister moon with softer gleam,
*O praise him, O praise him,
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.*

2. Swift rushing wind, so wild and strong,
High clouds that sail in heaven along,
O praise him, alleluia!
New-breaking dawn, in praise
rejoice,
And lights of evening, find a voice:

3. Cool flowing water, pure and clear,
Make music for your Lord to hear,
Alleluia, alleluia!
Fire, with your flames so fierce and bright,
Giving to all both warmth and light:

4. Dear mother earth, who day by day
Unfolds God's blessings on our way,
O praise him, alleluia!
All flowers and fruits that in you
grown,
Let them his glory also show:

5. Let all things their Creator bless
And worship God in humbleness,
O praise him, alleluia,
Praise, praise the Father, praise the
Son,
And praise the Spirit, Three in One.

10. Prayers of dismissal and blessing

A Collect for the day: O God, who, in the death and resurrection of your Son, have raised up this fallen world: may we and all your people, whom you have saved from the gates of everlasting death, rejoice in your eternal presence; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end. Amen. **Amen.**

Words of Renewal

God of life and God of light, as we seek a new relationship with your creation may we sense the grace and peace of a new relationship with you.
Amen.

11. **Recessional anthem:** Luis Meseguer Mira, *Genesis 1* – a preparation for Sabbath.



Listening to Creation Scavenger Hunt



The psalms encourage us to pay attention to the sounds of the created world.

Go outside and listen for the sounds below. Tick, write or draw what you hear. If you want to record them e.g. using your phone, they might be shared with the group later.

A sound linked to weather 'Lightning and hail, snow and clouds, stormy winds that do his bidding' Ps 148: 8  <input data-bbox="435 1037 521 1120" type="checkbox"/>	A bird singing or calling 'The birds of the sky nest by the waters; they sing among the branches' Ps 104: 12  <input data-bbox="920 1037 1007 1120" type="checkbox"/>	Running water/waves 'He makes springs pour water into the ravines; it flows between the mountains' Ps 104: 10  <input data-bbox="1430 1037 1516 1120" type="checkbox"/>
An insect 'Small creatures' Ps 148: 10  <input data-bbox="435 1384 521 1467" type="checkbox"/>	A sound that is high up 'Praise him, sun and moon; praise him, all you shining stars!' Ps 148: 3 _____	An animal 'The lions roar for their prey, and seek their food from God.' Ps 104: 21  <input data-bbox="1414 1395 1500 1478" type="checkbox"/>
A sound that makes you feel calm/happy 'May my meditation be pleasing to him, as I rejoice in the Lord.' Ps 104: 34 _____	Trees/Leaves 'The trees of the Lord are watered abundantly, the cedars of Lebanon that he planted' Ps 104: 16  <input data-bbox="920 1731 1007 1814" type="checkbox"/>	Eating 'Bringing forth food from the earth' Ps 104: 14  <input data-bbox="1414 1731 1500 1814" type="checkbox"/>
The sound of people 'Young men and women, old men and children.' Ps 148: 12  <input data-bbox="435 2045 521 2128" type="checkbox"/>	Breathing 'When you take away their breath' Ps 104: 29  <input data-bbox="920 2045 1007 2128" type="checkbox"/>	A work noise 'Then people go out to their work, to their labor until evening' Ps 104: 23  <input data-bbox="1430 2045 1516 2128" type="checkbox"/>

Call of Creation

Charis Yip

Verse $\text{♩} = 78$ G Am

V1 The wind whis-pers soft-ly and o-cean waves roar; See the
 V2 See the light break-ing through tow-er-ing trees; Dawn is

4 G/B C G

birds as they dive, as they cry, as they soar. Breeze on the sea-side,
 bursting to life, for He said, "It is good." Hear the sigh of leaves rust-ling in the

7 Am G/B C **Prechorus**

foot-prints in sand; Take in na-ture's wild beau-ty o-ver this land. Though
 calm af-ter storm, ri-vers danc-ing down hill-sides on this beau-ti-ful morn. So

10 Am Em C

flow-ers fade, they still bow down; trees reach the skies, yet still
 qui-et He made it, yet still it sings; be still and lis-ten as it

13 D **Chorus** G C

wor-ship the One Who made the stars, who paint-ed the hea-vens, who
 wor-ships the King

16 Em C G

craft-ed the flow'rs with lov-ing in-ten-tion; e-v'ry cry, e-v'ry whis-per, e-v'ry

19 C Em C G

call in the night is a sym-pho-ny of wor-ship, and a song ta-king flight!

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 cyipshop@gmail.com – get in touch if you want to discuss any commercial use of this song.

To hear a performance of this see: https://soundcloud.com/charis_chords/call-of-creation
<https://www.linkedin.com/in/charis-y-206b7b355>