A timeline reflection

We used

- 60 yard path with space for people to safely walk along it
- Walking pole

Script

Let's begin with the story of creation from the start of the Gospel of John

[have someone read it with 2 second pauses at end of each line]

In the beginning was the Word,
the Word was with God,
and the Word was God.
He was with God in the beginning
Through him all things came to be
Not one thing had its being but through him
All that came to be had life in him

As we begin it seems right to bring to mind the big themes that led to this Season of Creation being in our calendar.

First theme: God creates and we are invited to delight in being part of that Creation, part of Earth.

2nd theme: choices made by humanity have harmed Earth and brought us to several emergencies. The climate being disrupted by burning fossil fuels, is the one that we hear of most often. We are all called to make changes together in how we live, in how we organise socially, economically, globally.

Our pilgrimage path is superbly chosen to invite reflection on these themes

[having already walked a few hundred yards since we started the pilgrimage]

We are already using our senses to be with nature: plants, and all sorts of creatures including people. We are also in a built environment – perhaps

sometimes an expression of human creativity, and perhaps sometimes expressions of, well you can decide! In fact we are walking on a built environment – the old railway.

But for now, on this day when the equinox makes us alert to the orbit of Earth round the Sun, I invite you to imagine that for the next few minutes we are walking from the moment of Creation through to the present.

In a timeline of some 60 yards, from here to the traffic warning signs, we will imagine time travelling for 13 billion years from the creation of the universe to the present day. Each yard is something like 200 million years Let's recall some of what happened, knowing that it's the work of God and gives God praise.

I'll recall some significant events, and after each I will invite a response. When I say "for this" the response you might wish to make is

with all creation we give God praise

Let us begin. We are gathered with Christ among us, in God's world

For this, **with all creation we give God praise**

[point at ground, mark with chalk]

Let this point represent 13 billion years ago the start of creation, what is sometimes called the Big Bang. Before that there was no space, no time nothing to hold energy and story. Space, time and energy were created and our story began.

God's Word spoke in the moment the universe started

For this, **with all creation we give God praise**

[walk 1/3rd]

The energy became particles, and the particles formed stars. Each shone for billions of years and then collapsed into stardust, that gathered into planets and new stars.

God's Word was in the forming and reforming of the stars and the planets

For this, with all creation we give God praise

(2/3 of the walk…)

4.5 billion years before now the story of Earth began when one planet formed in an orbit around the star we now call the Sun It was in an amazing Goldilocks orbit – it was just right. It was just right for life, Never too far from the Sun, never too close, but just right. Its spin meant each part warmed in the sun then cooled in the dark never becoming either hugely hot or cold; water was mainly liquid. Earth gained a moon, that made tides and in the ebb and flow, and in time simple life formed. The tilt of Earth's axis created the rhythm of the seasons. It was just right for life.

God's Word was in Earth and its support for life
For this, with all creation we give God praise

Let us walk on. (Here 350 MYrs ago – ~1.6 yards from the present – the rocks under our feet were on the equator… and deep under mountains.)

Life became more diverse, and dinosaurs roamed Earth for 100 M yrs until some 66 Myr ago, hereabouts in our timeline.

[Point to 10" from the present…]

Life in Earth became more complex and diverse. Then some 350 000 years ago – a twentieth of an inch before the end of our timeline - humans came into being

God's Word was in Earth and its flourishing life, and then in humanity
For this, with all creation we give God praise

Let's imagine this last tiny bit of the timeline, the twentieth of an inch, this era with humans, expanded to the length of this **walking pole**.

[someone to hold it so its in front of me, length set to about 135cm].

From 350 000 years ago our species existed [point] and the present day is now [other end]

Around 100 000 years ago [point 1/3 from end] there was thought to be a migration of people from Africa over the Earth. Humanity was using our freedom to love or dominate, to live kindly or selfishly, to cherish the Earth or to abuse it, to build kingdoms or kindom, empires or community.

[point to ~1cm from end] About 2000 years ago Jesus Christ, he through whom all things have their being, came and lived, died and rose. We were called to commit to the Kindom of God and

God's Spirit came to dwell with us
For this, with all creation we give God praise

This last half mm represents the last 150 years. Its when we realised we were damaging the Earth. It had seemed so big, but now we knew we were doing global harm, by burning fossil fuels and other actions, sometimes in ignorance, but increasingly in apathy and selfishness. Since then humankind have reversed the flowering of life and diversity on Earth, the flowering over 4 billion years - so many species are dying out, and Earth's resources benefit the few and the harm of climate chaos most affects the poorest.

But God's Spirit still dwells in us, and calls us to live deliberately and lightly as part of Earth, still delighting in it, and transforming harm into God's kindom.

And so

For this, with all creation we give God praise

Let's continue our pilgrimage

Mike Mineter, written for the SEECAT pilgrimage, September 2024