

Feast - Celebrating our Life Together

There are all sorts of good things about being Moderator of General Assembly and one of the best is the opportunity to join groups of people large and small to celebrate the life we have as followers of Christ so first thank you for the invitation to be with you today

Now I am going to begin by showing you some pictures some of the images you will recognize some you may not but the title of today begins Feast

Now there is a feast (*cotoneaster berries*) well at least if you are one of these(*moths*) or one of these(*bees*) or one of these (*birds*)

And here is another feast (*figs*) for bats, monkeys, caterpillars, insects or birds to say nothing of human beings!

And another feast (*apples*) for moths, for caterpillars, for these guys (*birds*) again to say nothing of (*children*)!

And finally - as far as pictures are concerned (*oak tree*)

Does this look like a feast?

Well maybe not in the way apples or figs do or even in the way big bunches of nice bright red berries do but here are just a few examples of the 600 + insects, animals and birds which rely on the oak tree for nourishment shelter and life.

Feasts are all around us and of course it is at this time of year that we celebrate the feasts which we enjoy

throughout the year. God's goodness in his creation, God's abundance, God's amazing diversity could any of us possibly have conceived of the variety which makes up our natural world.

Could any of us - if we didn't know better - imagine that here is an oak tree or a chestnut tree?

Could any of us have devised the range of shapes of leaves or the range of colours of flowers or the range of flavours and textures which we find in the fruit and vegetables we enjoy

God has given us a wonderful, amazing, colourful diverse world of which we are a part. We should indeed be celebrating, giving thanks to God and sharing our joy with each other.

But let me take you a little bit further into that world of creation. In showing you the pictures of insects, animals and birds in conjunction with pictures of the fruit of the trees I wasn't telling quite the whole story.

Some of those insects, animals and birds don't live on the fruit but on the leaves or the bark of the tree and then there is another layer of information which is that each of those insects, animals and birds are the food or shelter for other creatures and the trees need all of the things which they feed and shelter in order that they can survive

God has indeed made a wonderful world where everything is dependent on everything else and where everything is connected with everything else, where everything

compliments everything else. A fact which does not relate only to the natural world as we have thought about it in the last few minutes.

It is something which is true for each of us

Here are a few more pictures which show a variety of environments in which trees grow.

Trees are found in different environments and another amazing thing that God has done is to equip them for that environment.

As I have traveled round the country during the last 15 months I have visited churches in (what for me seem to be) idyllic sunny green country places. I have visited churches set between the shopping centre and the bus station and I have visited churches in villages and towns.

I have also visited chaplains working at Heathrow airport and at the International Conference Centre here in Birmingham.

I have heard about work with young people and with old people with people born and brought up in these islands and people new to the country. With people with different cultural identities and with people whose lives are mainly lived on our streets

In each of these situations different skills and experiences are required, different shapes and colours, different flavours and textures and the joy of being together and of

serving God in our own unique places is that he will use all our uniqueness as our contribution to the whole.

Let's celebrate too the fact that each of us have both the opportunity to give and to serve but we also need each other interdependent, interconnected and complimentary one to another but all working to show God's love to this hurting and diverse world.

This is the preaching scarf which was made for me to wear when I am being Moderator. It shows the United Reformed Church symbol, the fish and the cross, symbols central to our faith. The rainbow for we are a rainbow people, diverse but held together in faith and the celtic knot design signifying the way we are all intertwined and interdependent.

Let's give thanks for the feast which God provides and let's celebrate our life together

Mrs Val Morrison

(moderator of the general Assembly of the United Reformed Church)