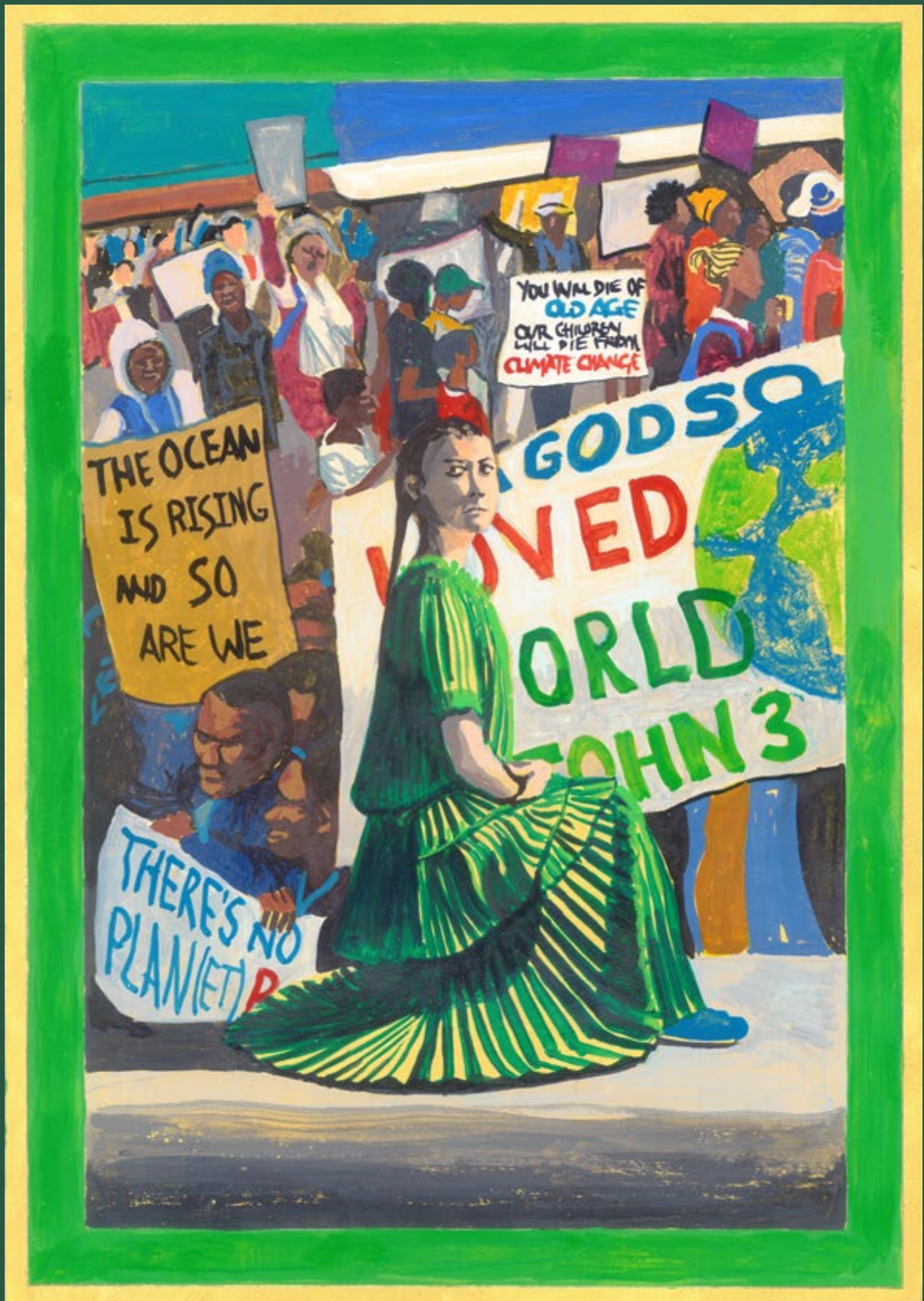




**Season of
Creation Year C**

FRIDAYS FOR FUTURE

Greta Thunberg is a Swedish teenaged activist who, at age 15, began protesting outside the Swedish parliament in August 2018 about the need for immediate action to combat climate change. Her “school strike for the climate” began attracting media attention and she has since become an outspoken climate activist. In response to the publicity, the school strike for climate movement began in November 2018 and spread globally after the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP24) in December the same year.

On 15 March 2019 an estimated 1.4 million students in 112 countries around the world joined her call in striking and protesting. A similar event involving students from 125 countries took place on 24 May 2019. In July 2019, on behalf of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), secretary-general Mohammed Barkindo declared Thunberg, and other young climate activists as the “greatest threat” to the fossil fuel industry.

Thunberg has received various prizes and awards for her activism. In March 2019, she was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. In May 2019, at the age of 16, she was featured on the cover of Time magazine. Some media have described her impact on the world stage as the “Greta Thunberg effect”.

School strikes for the future are now taking place all over Africa.

Mash, R.
Season of Creation Year C
Anglican Church of Southern Africa
Environmental Network
2019

FOREWORD

The Web of Life

"I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you and with every living creature ... on Earth." (Genesis 9:9-10)

We are part of a single, wondrously complex web of life that is woven by God. Each year from September 1 to October 4, the Christian family celebrates the good gift of creation. This global celebration is now embraced by the wide ecumenical community. We share one common home.

During the Season of Creation, we unite as one family in Christ, celebrating the bonds we share with each other and with *"every living creature on Earth"* (Genesis 9:10). The Christian family celebrates the Season by spending time in prayer, considering ways to inhabit our common home more sustainably, and lifting our voices in the public sphere. We must speak up for those who have no voice" (Prov 31:8)

The devastation of the web of life is, in itself, a tragic loss. We contemplate this loss and pray that it ends. We also pray for justice, as the most vulnerable among us suffer most deeply as the web of life begins to unravel. Our faith calls us to respond to this crisis with the urgency born of moral clarity. We were called to be stewards of Creation, and we have failed. The younger generation are rising up now and calling for the Earth to be healed. Let us join them and work together to protect the web of life which sustains us all.

.....

This Season of Creation rather than using separate themes we are using the readings from the Revised Common Lectionary . Each section contains sermon notes and liturgical resources.

Week One :	World day of prayer for creation
Week Two:	The consequences of lifestyle
Week Three:	The community of all creation
Week Four:	The cry of the earth and the cry of the poor
Week Five:	The Curse of Affluence
Week Six:	St Francis Day

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	Theme	First Reading	Psalm	Second Reading	Gospel
Week One	World day of prayer for creation	Jeremiah 2: 4-13	Psalm 81: 1, 10-16	Hebrews 13: 1-8, 15-16	Luke 14: 1, 7-14
Week Two	The Consequences of lifestyle	Jeremiah 18: 1-11	Psalm 139: 1-6, 12-18	Philemon 1-21	Luke 14: 25-33
Week Three	The Community of all creation	Jeremiah 4;11-12, 22-28	Psalm 14	1 Timothy 1: 12-17	Luke 15;1-10
Week Four	The Cry of the earth and the cry of the poor	Jeremiah 8: 18-9:1	Psalm 79:1-9	1 Timothy 2: 1-7	Luke 16; 1-13
Week Five	The Curse of Affluence	Jeremiah 32: 1-3a, 6-15	Psalm 91:1-6, 14-16	1 Timothy 6:6-19	Luke 16: 19-31
Week Six	St Francis Day	Lamentations 1 : 1-6	Psalm 137	2 Timothy 1 :1-14	Luke 17: 5-10

Five Movements of The Liturgy

The following five movements form the order of the liturgy: God gathers us, Service of the Word, Responding to the Word, Service of the Table and Commissioning.

- **The Gathering:** The congregation is welcomed, and the theme of the service is introduced. The penitence can be positioned here, or it may follow the sermon.
- **The Proclamation of God's word:** Here the word of God is read and preached.
- The affirmation of our Faith can be an important part of the Proclamation
- **Responding to God's word:** Prayers of the People are included here. Creative responses such as drama, liturgical dance or short video clips can be used. The penitence may follow the word.
- The peace may be shared according to custom
- **Celebrating at the Table:** Natural elements can be used, either a whole loaf or small rolls. This could be baked by a family. Local wine can be used.
- **Sending out:** Post Communion prayers, prayers of commitment on the theme of the day and a blessing.



FIRST EUCHARISTIC PRAYER FOR THE SEASON OF CREATION

The Lord be with you

And also with you

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to God

Let us give thanks to the Lord,
our God of all of Creation

It is right to give God thanks and praise

You spoke the Word and all that is in heaven and on the earth, all things, came to be. Your Spirit hovered over the primal elements, and you brought forth life in forms innumerable, including this our fragile earth, and we amongst its inhabitants.

As our past is in you, so our hope for the future rests with you. As we have turned from your way, so we turn again to the warmth of your love. Through you all things are brought to new life.

And now we give you thanks for the glories of your creation given into our care, and for the opportunities we have to share that richness with all your people.

And so with the wonders of creation and the songs of praise of all your creatures both in heaven and on earth we praise you now and forever saying:

Holy, holy...

In the night that Jesus was betrayed, he took bread, work of human hands, gift of our earth, and gave thanks to God. He broke the bread to speak to

us of the breaking of his body upon the cross. He gave it to his friends and said: Take and eat, for this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.

He took the wine, work of human hands, gift of our earth, and gave thanks to God, Creator. He poured out the wine to speak to us of the pouring out of his blood. He gave it to his friends saying:

This is my blood of the new covenant, shed for you and for all creation for the forgiveness of sins. Every time you drink of the wine, do this in remembrance of me.

So we proclaim the mystery of faith:

Christ has died

Christ is risen

Christ will come again.

Therefore God, we who seek your reconciliation; we who need reconciliation one with another; we who hope for reconciliation with all creation, draw close to this mystery.

In being broken, poured out and buried, life sprang forth again. In the breaking, there is an opening up; in the pouring out, there are the roots of sharing; in death and burial, there is the seed of the new life to come.

As we look in our world, in our lives, and in our hearts, for his second coming, keep us close to this vision



that we have seen. Through the giving in the bread and wine, reconcile us to our world. Send upon us, and upon all your creation, the life-giving Spirit who first moved upon the waters of the deep. Stir in us the creative and redeem the destructive. Unite us with you through the body and blood of your Son, your Word made flesh.

By whom, and with whom and in whom, in the unity of your Creative Spirit, with all that has been, is, and will be in your universe, we stand before you and worship you, God of all, in songs of everlasting praise,

Blessing and honour and glory and power be yours for ever and ever. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer etc

Final blessing

Go out into the world rejoicing, and encounter the Creator who waits to meet you there;

Rejoice in its richness and diversity and live as those who praise God for its bounty;

and the blessing of the Creator God, the Eternal Father, the Risen Son and the Promised Holy Spirit

bless you that you might be a blessing to others today and always.

Amen

SECOND EUCHARISTIC PRAYER FOR THE SEASON OF CREATION

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts

We lift them up unto the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give God thanks and praise.

We thank and praise you almighty Father. In wisdom you guide the course of the world and cherish us with all tender care.

We thank you that we can come together around this table in the name of Jesus your Son, the first born of all creation. In him all things were

created, visible and invisible, and all things hold together in him.

We thank you that you have sent your Holy Spirit to make of us a new community of faith to serve you within your creation.

And now we give you thanks because you have given the earth into our care, and call us to praise you day by day for the marvels of your creation.

And so with the wonders of creation and the songs of praise of all your creatures both in heaven and on earth we join in one great act of awe and adoration:



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

God of all creation, send your Spirit upon the goodness of the earth, and upon these gifts of bread and wine, that in them we may recognize and receive the fullness of the Risen Christ: bread broken and wine poured, Body given, and Blood shed.

On the night he sat at table with his disciples and with them recalled the wonder of your creation and the wonder of your covenant with your chosen people, He took bread, gave you thanks, blessed it and broke it, saying: Take this all of you and eat it. This is my Body, which will be given up for you.

In the same way he took the cup and giving you thanks and praise, He gave the cup to his disciples and said: Take this all of you and drink from it, this is the cup of my Blood, the Blood of the new and everlasting covenant. It will be shed for you and for all so that sins may be forgiven.
Do this in memory of me.

So we proclaim the mystery of faith:

**Christ has died
Christ is risen
Christ will come again**

As we remember the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ,

we celebrate the goodness of the earth, our companionship in this world and the sharing of all skills and arts that enrich our lives. We share the cup of our humanity matured over the unnumbered centuries of the long struggle that has gone into making of this world; our living and dying, our fears and our hopes.

Together with those who have drawn sustenance from this soil, those with whom we share it, and those to whom we pass it on, we share this bread and raise this cup in fulfilment of the Lord's command: through him, with him, in him in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honour is yours, Almighty Father, forever and ever

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer etc

Final blessing

Go forth confident in the hope in which you have been saved:

Praise God in all creation:

follow Christ through whom all things are made:

in the power of the Spirit become a beacon of hope to the world:

and the blessing of the Creator God, the Eternal Father, the Risen Son and the promised Holy Spirit bless you that you might be a blessing to others today and always.

Amen

Authorised for use in the Anglican Church of Southern Africa by the Synod of Bishops.





Week One

World Day of Prayer for Creation

Jeremiah 2: 4-13	We have defiled God’s wonderful Creation
Psalms 81: 1, 10-16	God wants to bless us with good things but we have turned away
Hebrews 13: 1-8, 15-16	The love of money contrasts with a generous heart
Luke 14:1, 7-14	God calls us to be humble and not to seek status.

COLLECT

Creator God
Your eternal power is seen in the whole web of life
Your voice is heard in the beauty of Creation
Rooted in your love may we worship you with all your creatures
And work to protect our common home
Through Jesus Christ our Lord
Amen



SERMON

Introduction

The World Day of Prayer for Creation has been growing in significance over the few years and needs to be supported. In 1989 the Orthodox Church declared 1 September as a Day of Prayer for Creation. In what has been regarded as an ecumenical gesture of global significance, Pope Francis announced that the Roman Catholic Church will also recognize September 1 as the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation. Other church leaders, including the international heads of various denominations have added their support. A number of Church organisations, including the World Council of Churches, the Lutheran World Federation and the Anglican Communion, have joined in this call for prayer. See www.seasonofcreation.org

Jeremiah 2: 4-13

An important part of Jeremiah's ministry took place after the death of King Josiah, from 609 BCE to Israel's exile to Babylon in 587/6 BCE. His message was addressed to Judah and he complains that the leaders, the priests, the teachers and the prophets have abandoned God, have neglected their duty and turned to other things. They have forgotten their roots, the God who had been faithful to them in delivering them from slavery in Egypt, protecting them in the wilderness and who had brought them to a land of plenty. They had defiled the land; the prophets had turned to Baal. He challenges both spiritual sin and ecological sin.

God, as he promised had brought them into a land flowing with milk and honey. It is God who "bought you into a plentiful land to eat its fruit and its good things." (Jeremiah 2:7a). But what

a powerful indictment "But when you entered you defiled my land and made my heritage an abomination." (Jeremiah 2:7b).

Harsh words indeed, and yet the same complaint can be levelled at us, God gave us this beautiful planet to care for. Already one million of the 5 million species on this planet is under threat of extinction due to human activity. Rivers are polluted, by 2050 there may be more plastic than fish in the oceans. Our children will inherit a bleak and barren planet.

Throughout the Hebrew Scriptures and particularly in the prophetic writings it is evident that there is a connection between the people's relationship to God and the earth itself. Faithfulness to God and justice in the community results in the fertility of the land – the blossoming of the desert. The opposite is also true. In considering major environmental problems like climate change, fracking, acid mine drainage and plastic pollution, let us explore the link between unjust and exploitative political and social systems and the destruction of the planet. What can we do to work for environmental justice – justice and fairness in the way both human beings, the land, the seas and the atmosphere are treated? How can we hear both the cry of the poor and the cry of the earth?

The complaint in Jeremiah is that people have forgotten and turned from God. they "*have committed two evils: they have abandoned me, the fountain of living water, and have dug cisterns for themselves, cracked cisterns that can hold no water*" (Jer. 2:12-13)

They no longer listen to God. Our society has also turned to other gods – gods of materialism and wealth. The earth is no longer regarded as



a gift from God to be used and enjoyed by all for the common good. We privatise nature and attach a market value to it.

The symbol of the cracked cisterns is a powerful one. We are reminded of the precious gift of water, where it comes from, where it is stored and how it is distributed. How much does our water cost? Why do so many people die from water-borne diseases and lack of adequate sanitation? Should access to drinkable water not be a basic human right? What can our church do to ensure the water supply in our community is clean and affordable? How can the voice of the church be used in advocacy to amplify the voice of the voiceless? How do we: "Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute." (Proverbs 31:8.) Who can we partner with to address crucial issues of water and sanitation justice?

Psalms 81:1, 10-16

This Psalm addresses similar themes to the message from Jeremiah. The appeal to Israel is for them to *"sing aloud to God our strength; shout for joy to the God of Jacob."* (v1) Israel has turned away and does not listen to God. They have forgotten that it was God who had brought them out of slavery in Egypt (v 10a); and it is God who wants to satisfy them with good things – the finest wheat and honey from the rock (v 10b and 16). We need to emphasize the goodness of creation, the blessing of its abundance and fruitfulness. This should be our motivation to appreciate it and to enjoy it. We usually tend to frighten people into action by emphasising the damage that is being done to the earth. Let us see creation as something of lasting value that is to be preserved and protected. Let us look after the earth so that it

may look after us.

Hebrews 13: 1-8, 15-16

The words are practical words of advice on how to live well, in the service of God and others. Compassion and empathy with those who suffer is important. *"Let mutual love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers.... Remember those in prison.... Keep your lives free from the love of money."* (v 1, 2, 3, 4, 5). The love of money or consumerist society is contrasted with a generosity of spirit to those in need.

We are urged to "keep our lives free from the love of money". (Hebrews 13:5a). How do we do this? What is the impact of materialism and consumerism on God's creation? In what ways do our economic systems promote greed and hoarding and ultimately the destruction of the natural environment? How can we work at transforming our economic systems to be ones that promote sharing and the preservation of the integrity of creation? What can we as a church do to model a community of generosity, caring, and sharing what we have? How can we become a church that is marked by simplicity?

Our faith in Jesus is to be expressed in practical ways: *"Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have"*. (v 15, 16) The words from the book of Hebrews which speak about qualities like love and hospitality are usually taken to refer only to human beings. But what about the rest of creation? Should our "doing good" and "sharing what we have" not also extend to all God's creatures, to the whole earth community of which humans are an integral part? If the good news of the reign of God is for the whole earth then surely all of life should be our concern? How can our church become a loving community



that embraces all of creation?

In this section wonderful words of the assurance of God's presence and comfort are quoted: *"I will never leave you or forsake you."*(v 5b) And, *"God is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can anyone do to me?"* (v 6) .If our hands are clenched tightly to hold onto what we have, then we cannot receive blessing from God. It is as we open our hands to the needs of others that God can pour blessings into our lives.

Luke 14:1, 7-14

This parable is told by Jesus at the house of the leader of the Pharisees, on the sabbath. Having healed the person "who suffered with swelling." (v 2), and challenged the religious leaders about their interpretation of what is permissible to do on the sabbath, Jesus takes the opportunity to challenge them further.

Jesus warns the guests invited to the wedding banquet against sitting down at the main table - *"the place of honour."* (v 8) Rather take another seat and be moved up to a more important seat later. The most important seating place would have been given on the basis of social standing or power. Jesus indicates that this social system

will be inverted, those who put themselves forward as important will be "humbled", and vice versa (v 11). It is often a desire for status symbols that promotes a materialistic lifestyle – we judge people by the car they drive or the cell phone they use. God's invitation is extended to all, irrespective of wealth or any other quality. Jesus' "table fellowship" was a means he used to challenge the systems that accorded status and honour to some and shame and discrimination to others.

All the readings refer to food/eating in some way. Where does our food come from? Is it healthy? Is it produced in a sustainable way, in ways in which the land is not exploited so that the fertility of the soil is not compromised in the process? Do people have access to land to grow food? What is the impact of junk food on our bodies and on the environment? What negative impacts do the genetic modification of food, especially staple food, having on the health of human beings as well as the health of the environment? What can your church do to help ensure that all in your community have sufficient food to eat? How are we using our church land to grow food?

The following suggestions are offered to promote the World Day of Prayer for Creation:

- Celebrate the World Day of Prayer for Creation in your services today.
- If your Sunday service does not have this focus then arrange another service in which you can pray for creation. Even better, plan to hold an ecumenical service with other churches in your neighbourhood for this purpose.
- In preparing this service choose hymns and songs that express the goodness of creation, the threats to its future and the vocation of human beings to cherish all of life and to ensure its flourishing.
- Put on your notice board or in your church newsletter environmental challenges that require pray and further action.
- Develop prayers and other liturgy that is environmentally friendly and which can become part



of your regular services. Pray regularly for creation in your services.

- Make connections between the sacraments and nature; for example for baptism we use water; for the Lord's Supper/Mass we use bread and wine.
- Work at establishing and strengthening ties with other churches in your neighbourhood, not just among the pastors or clergy but among the people too.
- Begin an environment group within your congregation.
- Begin planning for the World Day of Prayer for Creation next year.

Rev Dr Andrew Warmback, adapted from Word and Worship 2018/2019

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Warmback, Andrew. 2017. The Church and Ecological Justice, Cluster Publications, Pietermaritzburg.

UN biodiversity report warns one million species are at risk: <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/2019/05/ipbes-un-biodiversity-report-warns-one-million-species-at-risk/>

By 2050 there may be more plastic in oceans than fish <https://www.news24.com/Green/News/by-2050-there-may-be-more-plastic-in-oceans-than-fish-un-20180605>



LITURGICAL MATERIAL FOR WEEK ONE

GATHERING

Gathering in God's Name
The heavens declare the glory of God
The firmament proclaims God's handiwork
The plants and trees show God's presence
Let us join with creation in praising God

Penitence

(Powerful images can be projected as the penitence is said)

Giver of life
in the midst of a plundered earth
we groan with creation

All: have mercy on us

Giver of Life
in the midst of poisoned water
we groan with creation

All: have mercy on us

Giver of life
in the midst of polluted air
we groan with creation

All: have mercy on us

Giver of Life,
in the midst of mountains of waste
we groan with creation

All: have mercy on us

RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD

Prayers of the People

All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe and in the smallest of your creatures.
You embrace with your tenderness all that exists.
Pour out upon us the power of your love,
that we may protect life and beauty.
Fill us with peace, that we may live

as brothers and sisters, harming no one.

O God of the poor, help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth, so precious in your eyes.

Bring healing to our lives, that we may protect the world and not prey on it, that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.

Touch the hearts
of those who look only for gain
at the expense of the poor and the earth.
Teach us to discover the worth of each thing,
to be filled with awe and contemplation,
to recognize that we are profoundly united
with every creature as we journey towards your infinite light.

We thank you for being with us each day.
Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle
for justice, love and peace.ⁱ

CELEBRATING AT GOD'S TABLE

Jesus invites us to come to the table
here in this bread and wine, may we encounter
Christ who calls us to care for the poor, the Earth,
and all who are in need. All who long for Christ are
welcome at this table.ⁱⁱ

THE SENDING OUT OF GOD'S PEOPLE

This we know: the earth does not belong to us.

The earth is the Lord's and so are all its people

This we know: we did not weave the web of life.

The earth is the Lord's and so is all that breathes on it.

This we know: we are called to till and work the earth.





The earth is the Lord's and so are all who work the land.

This we know: that we are called to take care of creation.

The earth is the Lord's yet we have polluted and abused it.

This we know; that whatever befalls the earth

Befalls the sons and daughters of the earth

This we know: that the earth is the Lord's

And so we will serve Him in it

Amenⁱⁱⁱ

SUGGESTED HYMNS

The Earth is the Lord's

(Carolyn Winfrey Gillette)

Tune: Immortal, invisible, God only wise)

"The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof."

Creation reminds us, O God, of your love.

By grace we are learning, as year leads to year,
We are called to be stewards, your caretakers here.

Your rainforests nurture the world that we share.

Your wetlands give animals shelter and care.

Your coral reefs cradle the life of the sea.

You've shown us, in love, what your good world can be.

Too often, O God, we abuse your good earth.

We fail to remember its beauty and worth.

We take from creation much more than we need,

We threaten your world through indifference and greed.

May we be good stewards of all that you give,

Protecting creation wherever we live.

May we be a Church that renews and restores
And lovingly cares for this earth that is yours.

SONG OF HEALING

(Norman Habel. Tune: Morning has Broken)

Healing is flowing, deep in the waters,

Flowing from Eden, flowing from old.

All through creation, God sends forth waters,

Oceans of healing, for all the world.

Healing is rising, fresh with the morning,

Healing is rising, bursting with grace.

Christ, our rich healing, deep in creation,

Heal Earth's deep wounds and rise in this place.

Healing is offered, leaves from the life tree,

Healing is offered nations at war.

Come, wounded Healer, torn by the violence,

Rise from the grave, bring peace to our shore.

Healing is given, flows from forgiveness,

Healing is given, flows from our faith.

Christ, give us heart to love your deep healing,

Living forgiveness, even in death.

Healing is rising, free in Christ's body,

Healing is flowing, free with Christ's blood.

May this deep healing pulse through our bodies,

Heal the world's wounds still bleeding and red.

MULTIMEDIA

What a wonderful world

<https://vimeo.com/67106231>



Week Two

The Consequences of Lifestyle

Jeremiah 18:1-11	Drought and floods are getting worse as a consequence of our actions
Psalms 139:1-6; 12-18	We were formed as part of the wonderful web of life.
Philemon 1-21	We have a responsibility to care for our sisters and brothers
Luke 14:25-33	We are called to change our lifestyle and challenge our friends and family

COLLECT

Loving God

you formed us as part of the web of all Creation

make us mindful of the consequences of our lifestyle choices;

challenge us to a simpler lifestyle:

and fill us with compassion for those who are most vulnerable

For Jesus Christ's sake

Amen



SERMON

Introduction

We often hear people say that we must care for Creation. In reality the Planet is well able to care for itself. Where there is a wound Nature heals itself. If humans were exported to Mars, the planet would quickly recover. What we need to do more is to care about what is happening to the planet. We need to care that we are producing excessive amounts of carbon, air pollution and plastics. We should care about the effects on vulnerable communities and on species at risk. When we start caring about what is happening to the Earth, we inevitably end up needing to examine ourselves and our lifestyles. If we do this honestly, we will be motivated to campaign against ourselves – to reduce our insatiable greed, our uncontrolled desires, our own selfish demands. And so the theme of this week- the consequences of lifestyle - challenges us to care about what is happening and to examine how our lifestyle might need to change.

Jeremiah 18:1-11

Why does God allow drought, famine and floods? This passage gives us some hints. We see God as the potter and the people and nations as the clay. God's sovereignty is balanced by our responsibility. God's plan was to create a perfect creation, but humans resist that plan, we are the flaws in the clay of the perfect pot that God was creating. From a human point of view it seems that God will scrap that bit of the plan and start again – but his ultimate plan – a perfect creation – is never thwarted. The choice is ours, do we bring disaster on ourselves, or do we change our ways now to avert that future and allow God to re-mould us.?

As we consider the fate of the Earth, this image of the potter is powerful. The Old Testament prophets saw the natural world as being responsive to human actions (Jeremiah 12:10-13; 22:6-9; 31:12-14; see also Isaiah 24:4-7; Hosea 4:1-3.) In our modern culture we see environmental abuse only in economic, political or technological terms. But there is a profound spiritual dimension that we often miss: 'When read in the light of Jeremiah's theological reading of the imperial geopolitics of ancient Mesopotamia, global warming, like the exile of ancient Israel, represents both the threat of judgement and the promise of a better way of living on God's earth than the neoliberal vision of a global market empire.' (Michael Northcott) Humans and other creatures form a complex web of interrelationships – our actions will bring consequences- negative or positive. Ecological abuse will have negative consequences on the future generations and the most vulnerable will be most impacted.

Human responsibility

The story of the potter shows us that although God is Almighty, He also allows us as human beings to make choices. Climate change and environmental degradation are results of the choices that individuals have made in our personal lifestyles and governments have made in their choices around economics and technology. Although the situation is bleak, it is not yet too late, the clay can be remoulded. Romans 8:19 reminds us that "Creation is standing on tiptoe for the children of God to be revealed". Our individual choices make a difference - and when those many small changes are networked with multitudes of others, they can lead to transformational change. The voice of faith is important in the current ecological crisis because although we recognise the



seriousness of the current situation we do not lose hope.

Psalm 139:1-6; 13-18

This beautiful Psalm tells the wonder of the creation of a human being, each one of us is precious in God's sight, each one of us is wonderfully made and has a purpose in life. And yet we are reminded in verse 14 "your works are wonderful" that all of God's handiwork is also precious in His sight. We have tended to concentrate on the love of God for human beings, forgetting that we are part of Creation. On the sixth day, God did not only create human beings, he created the whole web of life – living creatures with humans as part of the web. If we allow the web of life to unravel, we will destroy ourselves. We need to take time to lament the loss of each member of God's family of Creation and act to protect the great biodiversity that still exists before it is too late.

Philemon 1-21

In Paul's letter to Philemon, we find relationships being addressed within the context of a church community, which meets in a home. Onesimus is a slave who was serving Paul in prison and has become a Christian during that time. Now Paul returns Onesimus to Philemon with a request that he should be welcomed back with the status now of a Christian brother. v16 "no longer as a slave, but as a dear brother."

Philemon, presumably a wealthy Christian who hosts a church in his home, is asked to respond with welcome, forgiveness, and generosity.

This passage challenges us within the global community of the church, where the gap between the rich and poor is widening so hugely.

According to Oxfam, eighty two percent of the wealth generated last year went to the richest one percent of the global population, while the 3.7 billion people who make up the poorest half of the world saw no increase in their wealth . Climate change is impacting hardest on those most vulnerable and yet it is the wealthy who create most of the carbon emissions. If we really consider ourselves a global family, the body of Christ - then what do we need to do for the sake of our brothers and sisters? We face a triple emergency – climate change, loss of biodiversity and poverty and inequality.

The story of Philemon and Onesimus reminds us that we have a responsibility to care for people who are vulnerable. We recognise as sisters and brothers people from all across the world. There is an urgency to act, as floods and drought increase we will see a rapid increase in climate refugees and impact on safety and security. If we do not address climate change then we can never make poverty history – poverty will be inevitable.

Luke 14:25-33

Our tendency in Church is to make the message more attractive "to draw people in". And yet Jesus does not lower the bar of discipleship in order to avoid 'putting people off'. He actually does the opposite! When he meets someone who is very enthusiastic, he confronts them with very difficult demands. The crowds were following Jesus and yet instead of encouraging them, he emphasizes rather the cost of discipleship. The phrase about 'hating' one's relatives and even life itself is not of course a rejection of family or an encouragement to self-hatred. It means that nothing should take priority over our allegiance to Christ. Cultural norms or family traditions may need to change – we will have to 'count



the cost' as if we were engaged in a military campaign.

We will need to make decisions about our lifestyle, consumption, political allegiance, holiday habits, travel choices etc. We may need to reject some of the values of our peer groups and families if we are to be true to God's call to care for Creation.

We are challenged to become disciples, not just followers and that has a cost. We need to sit down and look at our lifestyles and decide what must change – just as in building an extension on your home or preparing for a battle, if we do not plan, the potential consequences range from ridicule, through to financial ruin or and military occupation. The potential costs of discipleship are spelled out. We have to consider our priorities and understand that following Jesus will take precedence over family ties and obligations, over relationships and commitments, over security and comfort, over possessions and finances, over popularity and crowds. Considering the environmental implications of our actions may cause conflict with our peer group and friends.

When we consider God's creation, there are many voices to listen to – firstly those living with the consequences of climate change and environmental destruction right now, but also scientists, economists, campaigners, theologians, and future generations. The costs of inaction are becoming clearer every day – because inaction is a path of "business as usual", and we are called to a path of transformational love. The blessings from listening to God's call to care are tangled up in struggle and costs to our current way of life – but the invitation to follow, and find new fruitful life, is there too. Can we "live more simply so that others may

simply live"

Jesus called people to be disciples, it was not just a physical following. Following Jesus involved a "metanoia" (radical turning around) of lifestyle, world-view and spiritual orientation. As Paul says 'So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!' (2 Cor 5.17). If our lifestyle as Christians is the same as those who are not Christians then we need to ask ourselves questions – have we been transformed from the culture of the day which worships consumerism?

Living the Word

Where can I start? The environmental challenges are so huge and what can one person do?

The place to start is here: follow your heartbreak. We cannot all be involved in all the environmental issues, so identify the one breaks your heart.

Perhaps it is climate change and the face of drought and famine. Educate yourself about the impact of climate change on a country or community where you have links. Commit yourself to doing an electricity and fuel audit of your home and your church. See how you can make small changes (geyser blanket, lift sharing, changing light bulbs). Get others involved in bigger project – solar panels for the church or school – and find out what your politician's stance is on renewable energy and challenge them in letters to the press. Get your Church denomination to divest from investments in fossil fuels. Look at where your pension money is invested, can it be taken out of fossil fuels? Remember the DOT principle: Do One Thing. Keep on doing it faithfully, inspire others, link up with others, and a movement may be started.



Perhaps it is plastic which breaks your heart, clogging our oceans and lands. Commit yourself to stop using plastic bags for shopping. Reduce one-use plastic for your family. Start a campaign at church! Get the local churches in your community to put pressure on supermarkets to stop using plastic bags. Sign a petition to get the Minister of the Environment to ban plastic bags – as has been done in Kenya and Rwanda. For example churches have started the “Bring your own bag” campaign. (1. Commit to bring your own bag when shopping; 2. invite unemployed church members to make bags; 3. Put pressure on your local store to stop using plastic bags; 4. Put pressure on the government to ban plastic shopping bags)

Or perhaps it is the loss of biodiversity that

breaks your heart, as animals and birds die out due to our neglect and greed. Commit yourself at home to stop using chemicals and products that kill insects. Promote them at church and school. Start an organic garden. Find a part of Creation near you that you can care for and encourage others to get involved in (river clean-up, local park or nature reserve). Get involved in an international campaign to protect an animal you care for.

The needs are huge - but the principle is this: start with what breaks your heart. Find an action you and your family can take. Inspire others, join networks. Research tells us that transformation change come when networked individuals change. And have fun!!- God is with you.

Sermon by Canon Rachel Mash, adapted from Word and Worship 2018/2019

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LITURGICAL MATERIAL FOR WEEK TWO

GATHERING

The theme is “the consequences of life-style”.
The young people or Sunday School could cut out pictures from magazines to make posters about the consequences of life-style, or prepare a short drama to be acted out in church.

The God of all invites you to come close.

We choose to come and follow.

The God of creation calls you to care.

We choose to come and listen.

The God of blessings wants you to flourish.

We choose to come and grow.

The God of life offers you life and love and hope.

We choose God's life, God's love and God's hope. ^v

Penitence

God of all, you give us life,
and in your generosity you give us freedom
To choose life and hope for us,
for others, and for creation,
Or to turn away to dust and despair.
Fill us with your love, for ourselves,
for others, and for creation,
That we would listen, we would follow,
And we would flourish in new fullness of life for all,
whatever it brings.

PROCLAIMING GOD'S WORD

Creed

We believe in God, who creates all things,
who embraces all things,
who celebrates all things, who is present
in every part of the fabric of creation.
We believe in God as the source of all life
who baptizes this planet with living water.

We believe in Jesus Christ, the suffering one,
the poor one, the malnourished one, the
climate refugee, who loves and cares
for this world and who suffers with it.

And we believe in Jesus Christ, the seed of life,
who came to reconcile and renew this
world and everything in it.

We believe in the Holy Spirit,
the breath of God, who moves with God
and who moves among and with us today.

We believe in everlasting life in God.
And we believe in the hope that one day God will
put an end to death and all destructive forces ^{vi}

RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD

Prayers of the People

Lord Jesus, Lord of life, you call us to follow,
And you warn us of the cost of discipleship.

We remember today those who cry out for peace
As they work in their communities
and across the world to end conflict.
We pray today for those who speak
up against systems of power,
As they seek to transform economics
and politics for the good of all.

Your Kingdom come

Your will be done

Lord of life, we pray today for
your creation, paying such a high price
For our development, greed and progress.
We remember today the land that
is no longer flourishing,
As water floods or runs dry and





seeds cannot grow or bear fruit.
We pray today for the seas and
all that is in them,
Where rising temperatures and
major changes bring death.
For all creation, groaning in adversity,

Your Kingdom come,
Your will be done.

Lord of life, we pray for ourselves that
we would hear the call to discipleship.
We know that our choices can
shape our children's future

We remember today that we are all
called to follow, you, choosing your
way of life over all other things.

We pray today for those we influence,
through our shopping, our travel,
our voting and our speaking out.
For all of us, in our daily decisions,

Your Kingdom come,
Your will be done.

SENDING OUT

Blessing

Deep Peace of the quiet earth to you
Deep peace of the still air to you
Deep peace of the forgiving heart to you
Deep peace of the Son of Peace ^{vii}

MULTIMEDIA

"Man"

[https://www.youtube.com/
watch?v=WfGMYdaICIU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WfGMYdaICIU)





WEEK THREE

The Community of Life

Jeremiah 4: 11-12, 22-28	Environmental Degradation is a result of sin and disobeying of God's laws.
Psalms 14	The Earth is sacred and should be treated with care and love
1 Timothy 1:12-17	There is hope, we can change our behaviour and work for the renewal of the Earth
Luke 15:1-10	If you love something you will sacrifice to save it

COLLECT

Creator God

you have created the community of life

May we give thanks for the holiness and wonder of all that you have created

and fulfil your call on our lives to be keepers and healers of your Earth

through Jesus Christ our Lord

Amen



SERMON

Introduction

As humans we were created as part of the web of life. Why then have we allowed it to become so damaged, why do we feel as if we are not part of it? There are four main types of theology that are resistant to the idea of the community of all of Creation.

- **“Escapist” theology:** Many Christians feel that the church should primarily be concerned with the message of salvation for humans: that Jesus Christ came to save human beings from sin and to reconcile us with God. The vertical relationship with God is more important than a horizontal concern for the environment. When Jesus returns we will receive a new earth, therefore we should not waste time protecting the earth.
- **“Mastery” or dominion theology:** Some Christians quote Genesis 1:26, “And God blessed them, and God said unto them, be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth and subdue it and have dominion over it.” Therefore they conclude that it is our God-given right to treat nature any way we want. We have been mandated to dominate and use the earth.
- **Prosperity gospel:** Some Christians believe that material possessions are a sign of God’s blessing. God wants us to prosper at all costs, even at the cost of the environment.
- **Fear of New Age:** Some Christians dismiss environmentalism as being “New Age”. They feel uncomfortable and threatened and fear that working with others towards a “green”

agenda may compromise their faith. They are afraid of pantheism (the belief that nature is divine) or paganism.

These passages help us to grapple with some of these concerns

Jeremiah 4:11-12, 22-28

For the people of Israel, the loss of their homeland was the loss of everything. In Jeremiah, God’s judgement is painted as a terrifying picture of the undoing of Creation itself. God reverses the creative work of the beginning of Genesis. The earth again becomes “waste and void” (v23). The mountains quake and birds and humans have disappeared – the works of civilization, both agricultural and urban, have vanished (v 23-26). Light has gone – and even the heavens grow dark (v28). Theologically and politically the Babylonian invasion of Judah means the end of the world. This destruction is as a result of human wickedness.

In the Biblical view, the earth and all that fills it is part of one web of life. A basic error of Western culture is to separate humanity from the rest of creation. The very term: ‘the environment’ suggests that we are a separate entity, while everything else is ‘out there’. A theology of domination has taught us that nature is something separate to be dominated and controlled. Modern technology separates us from being in touch with nature. It is something to be viewed on a TV or cell phone screen.

In Genesis, humans and all creatures are formed together on the same day (Gen 1:24-31, we don’t have our own ‘human’ day, we are one of God’s creatures. In this passage all suffer from God’s judgement. Humans have a pivotal role with a special calling for the well-being



of Creation. When we fail, all creation suffers. So this passage shows us two challenges: to work with God's redeeming purposes to save Creation, and at the same time to turn from the 'evil ways' that have incurred God's judgement.

"The majority of people in the world today seem to have lost touch with the earth from which we were all born. And because we no longer experience ourselves as part of the cosmos, many of us are participating in the destruction of God's creation. When we lose touch with creation, we lose touch with God."— Albert Nolan

God never stops loving us or the world, but there are consequences for our actions. The 10 Commandments command us not to covet our neighbours ox and ass and yet consumerist advertisements command us to covet all that we see. We have reduced the concept of "prosperity" and life in all its fullness to a life full of material goods. And we are reaping what we have sown, both in terms of physical illnesses and the impact on Creation and loss of biodiversity.

Psalm 14

Psalm 14 shows the breadth and depth of human corruption. "the fool has said in his heart, there is no God". We are trying to solve the climate challenges without looking at the deeper issues of values and morals. Gus Speth, former US Environmental Advisor to U.S. President Jimmy Carter said this "I used to think the top environmental challenges were biodiversity loss, eco-system collapse and climate change. I thought with 30 years of good science we could address those problems. But I was wrong. The top environmental problems are selfishness, greed and apathy. And to deal with those we

need a spiritual and cultural transformation . And we scientists don't know how to do that."

The reality is that for many Christians, although they worship God, their lifestyles are almost exactly the same as those who don't believe in God. We do not treat Creation as something sacred, created by God. Traditionally we have used the concept of 'stewardship' – looking after things well. Yet in biblical terms the word 'steward' is applied either to someone caring for a specific plot of land (vineyard, garden or field) or, as more often, an amount of money (in Greek an 'oikonomou'). To simply apply the term stewardship to the entire inhabited earth is to overlook the stronger biblical emphasis on the holiness and wonder of the world.

"And God saw that it was good – and it was very good" –is repeated over and over in Genesis 1 and 2. The words 'good' and 'God' derive from the same root in English. So as we may say "God is good", we may equally say "the Earth is godly!".

"There are no unsacred places; there are only sacred places and desecrated places." Wendell Berry

1 Timothy 1: 12-17

Saint Paul expresses gratitude to Christ Jesus for a life which changed radically because of the experience of grace in his life. He was formerly 'a blasphemer, a persecutor [of the Church], and a man of violence.' Now, in a radical turnaround, he has been strengthened, judged faithful and 'appointed to his [Christ's] service.' (v. 13). God's grace overflowed in his life, and Christ Jesus through faith, love and patience (v14-16) found Paul out. Paul who was the foremost amongst sinners can be strengthened and appointed to service, and so can we, both



as individuals and as the human race.

It is easy to become despondent on looking at the state of the Planet. World Wildlife Fund in their Living Planet Report indicate that since 1970 there has been a devastating drop in the population of creatures globally, 38% reduction in land animals, 81% of freshwater creatures and a 36% drop in ocean populations.

But this passage gives us hope that just as individuals can be transformed by grace, so too can the human population. It is not too late for us to be transformed from “persecutors of the Earth and people of violence”

Luke 15: 1-10

The power of this passage depends on our understanding of value of lost things. Without the assumption that lost things have value the parables would lose their force. Luke gives us three parables on this theme, a lost sheep, a lost coin and the next story in (v 11 -31) is the lost child. As the parables are told, the ratio of lost to safe changes; one sheep in a hundred, one coin in ten and one child in two. Yet the commitment of the shepherd, the woman (and the parent) is total and the scale of celebration at the end of each story is lavish.

The two parables in this reading take place both in an outdoor setting and within the home; the rural landscape and the domestic scene. Whatever the setting, and whatever the proportion of the missing to the safe, Jesus suggests that God's care is consistently generous. In contrast, many people tend to think that the disappearance of natural species is a matter of relatively small importance. In decision making matters, the economy often takes precedence over ecology. Partly as a result of such a mindset, we are

living through the sixth great extinction in the history of the Earth – and the first to be caused by humans. The current rate of extinction is said to be 100 or even 1,000 times above the natural level.

A true sense of the value of God's creation will cause us to repent of such callous disregard. God did not say – never mind one sheep is lost I still have 99. Or never mind about the coin, I still have others or I can buy some more.

Part of our worship needs to include a lament for what has been lost and a confession of what we have done to God's earth. This also includes the crime against the generations to come. We are stealing from our children's inheritance. And then we must get ready for action, like the persistent woman and the faithful shepherd and set out to save those who are in danger of being lost. “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world: indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.”
-Margaret Mead,

Living the Word

There are three stages that assist us in responding.

1. Gratitude

You cannot protect what you do not love. So it is important that we re-connect with nature. The opposite of love is not hate, it is apathy. “Apathy” means lack of feeling. Most Christians do not hate the world, but we don't love it. Choose to go for an outing into nature instead of the shopping mall. Take your kids for a picnic rather than a restaurant. Organise a hike for youth from church. Teach your grandkids to grow tomatoes. Walk with bare feet on the beach. Organise a Church service in nature



2. Lamentation

Hear the cry of the poor and the cry of the Earth. Read about the impact of climate change on the poorest communities, watch documentaries about the impact of plastic on our oceans. Read about the animals that have already become extinct. Bring that pain before God in personal prayer or group confession.

3. Take action

Make a list of what you are going to do and re-examine after six months.

There are four types of action - choose some from each kind

- “Holding actions” these are actions that limit the harm (such as recycling, saving water, reducing use of fuel or electricity)
- “Influencing others”: start recycling at school or church. Start a fundraiser to buy water tanks for church, start a garden at church
- “Spiritual practices”: eg praying in nature. Organising a service in nature. Finding a space where you can see nature when you do your devotions.
- “Systemic change”: get involved in a campaign. Offer an environmental organisation your support in terms of time and resources.

Canon Rachel Mash adapted from Word and Worship 2018/2019

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LITURGICAL MATERIAL FOR WEEK THREE

GATHERING

The Theme for this week – the Community of all Life- includes a lament for the species that are at risk and have already become extinct. The Youth or Sunday School can do some research on those creatures and eco-systems that are a risk and prepare pictures which could surround the altar.

You could start with this video clip :
“put it back” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tYE9YqaVv9E>

Call to worship

How wonderful, O Lord, are the
works of your hands!
The heavens declare your glory;
the arch of sky displays your handiwork.
In your love you have given us the power to behold
the beauty of your world robed in all its splendour.
The sun and the stars, the valleys and hills,
the rivers and lakes all disclose your presence.
The roaring breakers of the seas tell of your
awesome might; the beasts of the field and the
birds of the air speak of your wondrous will.
In your goodness you have made us
able to hear the music of the world.
You are in our midst. A divine voice sings
through all creation. ^{viii}

Penitence

Leader: O God, your fertile earth is slowly being
stripped of its riches,

All: Open our eyes to see.

Leader: O God, your living waters are slowly being
choked with chemicals,

All: Open our eyes to see.

Leader O God, your clear air is slowly being filled
with pollutants,

All: Open our eyes to see.

Leader O God, your creatures are slowly dying
and your people are suffering,

All: Open our eyes to see.

Leader God our maker, so move us by the wonder
of creation,

All: That we may repent and care more deeply.

Leader So move us to grieve the loss of life,

**All: That we learn to cherish and protect your
world.**

RESPONDING TO GOD’S WORD

Prayers of the People

Father, we praise you with all your creatures.
They came forth from your all-powerful hand;
they are yours, filled with your presence and
your tender love.
Praise be to you!

Teach us to contemplate you
in the beauty of the universe,
for all things speak of you.

Awaken our praise and thankfulness
for every being that you have made.

Give us the grace to feel profoundly joined
to everything that is.

God of love, show us our place in this world
as channels of your love
for all the creatures of this earth,
for not one of them is forgotten in your sight.



Enlighten those who possess power and money
that they may avoid the sin of indifference,
that they may love the common good,
advance the weak,
and care for this world in which we live.

The poor and the earth are crying out.
O Lord, seize us with your power and light,
help us to protect all life,
to prepare for a better future,
for the coming of your Kingdom
of justice, peace, love and beauty
Praise be to You.
(Pope Francis, *Encyclical*)

CELEBRATING AT THE TABLE

The Taking of the Bread

Blessed are you Lord God of all Creation. Through your goodness we have this bread which earth has given and which we have received from the silent soil. It is the bread of the earth, this silent earth bathed in morning light, this beautiful planet in the teeming galaxies of space: warm and well-lit for us, generous, faithful and surprising, bringing forth life in all its forms.

The Taking of the Wine

Blessed are you, Lord God of all Creation. Through your goodness we have this wine to offer, fruit of the vine and work of human hands. In our earth of many blessing the vine was planted, its roots reaching down to that richness from which all

nourishment, strength and health are drawn. ^{ix}

Creative ideas: as people come to receive communion, play birdsong instead of a hymn.

Birds <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oTcxaqilg4U>

SENDING OUT

Christ calls you to be his disciples, to serve him with love and compassion, to serve Earth by caring for creation, honouring the forests that God has planted to provide breath for all things living.

All: We will follow our Lord, the crucified Christ, listening for cries of injustice from Earth, groaning with a creation burdened by our sins. We will follow our Lord, the risen Christ, to become partners with Christ in healing our planet, working for the renewal of creation

We will care for creation, preserving the oceans

MULTIMEDIA

John Rutter's anthem "look at the world"
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T4k8oVf9v78>

Drama "God the artist" which shows how we have damaged God's world
<http://www.greenanglicans.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/WED-2015-God-the-Artist.pdf>





WEEK FOUR

Hear the Cry of the Earth and the Cry of the Poor

Jeremiah 8:18-9:1	Mourning for drought and failed harvest
Psalms 79:1-9	Lamentation and confession leads to healing
1 Timothy 2:1-7	We need to raise up prayers for those who are suffering around the world.
Luke 16:1-13	We are called to stand on the side of the marginalised.

COLLECT

Loving God

you created a world with enough for all our need, but not enough for all our greed

Help us to challenge structures of injustice

to commit ourselves to stand in solidarity with the poor

and to bring hope to those who are sinking in despair

through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour

Amen



SERMON

Introduction: Olive Theology

Traditionally there has been a split in Southern Africa when it comes to environmental issues. The late Steve De Gruchy explained that we have two agendas – firstly the traditional development agenda - concerned with poverty – housing , sanitation, unemployment – what he called the ‘brown agenda’. The second agenda is the “green agenda” and this has characteristically been the agenda of people who are not poor – “greens are concerned with saving the whale or the rhino, protecting endemic flowers, removing alien species and preventing urbanization. Christians and others are confronted with these two agendas – the brown agenda with its focus on poverty, and the green agenda with its focus on the environment.”

The solution he argues is to develop an “olive agenda” – “the mix of green and brown suggests an olive agenda; which in turn provides a remarkably rich metaphor – the olive – that holds together that which religious and political discourse rends apart: earth, land, climate, labour, time, family, food, nutrition, health, hunger, poverty, power and violence.”

Pope Francis brings these two agendas together as he challenges us to “hear the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.”

Jeremiah 8:18-9:1

Three voices can be heard in this passage. Firstly there is the voice of Jeremiah himself, in anguish over the plight of God’s people, pleading with God to end their suffering. Secondly there is the voice of the people of Israel who complain that God is absent, their harvest has failed and a

hard winter is ahead of them. Thirdly there is the voice of God, angry because the Israelites have abandoned him to serve other gods. Jeremiah feels both the pain of the people of Israel and the broken heart of God.

In the Bible communal suffering is understood to be caused by being estranged from God through unrighteousness and injustice. Jeremiah longs to be the mediator - bringing them back to God. “Is there no balm in Gilead?” Balm is an aromatic, medicinal substance derived from plants. Gilead was an area east of the Jordan River, well known for its spices and ointments. The “balm of Gilead” was an ointment with healing properties. The Bible uses the term “balm of Gilead” metaphorically as an example of something with healing powers. His tears become a symbol of balm and healing, bringing peace and also rain soaking the drought stricken fields. Tears are a symbol of repentance and also of healing and new life.

As Christians we must lament the huge suffering being caused to the most vulnerable because of drought, flooding and sea level rise as a result of climate change. But we must also lament that we have turned from God and embraced the consumerist life-style which is bringing misery to so many.

Psalm 79:1-9

This Psalm is also a lament over the destruction of God’s temple. The Psalm is very graphic, describing the horror of the disaster, bodies eaten by birds, human flesh attacked by wild animals, blood pouring like water. The suffering is too great and the people cannot cope any longer. They beg for forgiveness. “Help us and deliver us” (v 9). Later on at the end of the Psalm they express their confidence that God will heal



and bring new life “we your people the sheep of your pasture will praise you for ever” (v 13).

The readings from Jeremiah and Psalms are lamentations. When we consider the state of our countries – crime levels, environmental degradation and levels of inequality, we must indeed lament. Ecological grief is a new challenge – fear of the future as we consider climate change. Acknowledging ecological grief is not submitting to despair and it should not ‘switch us off’ from the issues, because we feel helpless to act. However, being open to the pain of ecological loss may be what is needed to mobilise us to act and prevent such losses. In the Bible, suffering, and particularly communal suffering, is often a consequence of sin. So in lament we also confess – we cannot accept a society where the poor live in shacks with no access clean running water, while other homes have more toilets than inhabitants. We cannot accept a society where profit is made for shareholders by degrading the face of the Earth. In our lament we must hear both the cry of the poor and the cry of the Earth.

1 Timothy 2: 1-7

This passage reminds us that the Church’s prayers should be global in their scope. Supplication, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings are to be made for everyone (v. 1) so that must include the poor, the needy and victims of injustice and environmental degradation. Prayer for ‘those who hold power kings and those in high positions’ (v. 2) shows that we must also pray for political changes. Peace and prosperity in the Biblical understanding is ‘shalom’ very different from the ‘prosperity’ gospel that is often preached which equates prosperity with worldly possessions. A healthy environment and a just society are both

necessary for such an outcome. Poverty and environmental degradation go hand in hand. As Pope Francis says in the Laudato Si “The poor and the earth are crying out”

Timothy calls us to prayer. For example how should we pray for rain? We went to school, we know the hydrological cycle, we know how rain is produced. As we pray for rain should we not also pray that people would stop cutting down trees, pumping carbon emissions into the air, wasting water and polluting it?

Luke 16:1-13

The shrewd manager (or the unjust steward)
The context of Luke 16 is money- there are two stories - the dishonest Steward and the Rich man and Lazarus, and this should be the context of our discussion. Luke generally has harsh things to say about the rich:

- He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. (1:53)
- Woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. (6:24)

According to Luke, being rich is not a good thing. This is probably because in first century Palestine to be rich often meant exploiting somebody through land foreclosures, charging interest, or collaborating with the ruling Romans. The manager faces economic ruin and so he decides to reduce the debts of those who owe his master. According to the Old Testament forgiving debts is a morally good thing to do, even though the motives are selfish. That the rich man commends the manager is striking; should we accept this commendation? Jesus calls the manager ‘adikia’ – literally unjust – so what does the story really mean?

The point of the story is not to emulate any



character. The rich man is evil. The manager is equally evil, despite his reduction of debts, which he only does to save his own skin (an act that earns the admiration of the evil master!)

What is important is to look at Jesus' comments that follow the story: "For the sons of this world are shrewder in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light." (16:8). The unjust manager realised that relationships were more important than money and knew how to use money to gain something more important.

So then what should we make of Jesus' advice to "... make friends for yourselves by means of mammon, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings."? Is Jesus not telling us to follow the example of the dishonest manager? No, the manager made "friends" in order to be repaid in social dividends whereas throughout Luke's Gospel Jesus teaches that making "friends" was to be done without hope of reciprocation, we are only freed from the power of mammon when we are free to give it away:

Give to everyone who begs from you, and from one who takes away your goods do not demand them back. (6:30)

But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great. (6:35)

Jesus is instructing us to do precisely the opposite of the dishonest manager – rather than making deals with the poor for personal gain Jesus calls us to use our money to make friends with those who cannot repay us thus creating social unity between rich and poor. We will be ultimately judged on our levels of compassion – how did we use our money? – "make friends for yourselves by means of mammon, so that when

it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings."

Where does our treasure lie? Ultimately the issue comes down to our love of mammon, or money and possessions. God calls us to be released from the hold of money, to use it to help the poor. If we love our mammon and possessions then we will use them shrewdly or dishonestly, seeking personal benefit like the dishonest manager. If we are freed from them, we can use them for kingdom growth.

Many churches are being challenged now to divest their funds from fossil fuels recognising that it is no longer ethical to make a profit from the suffering of many.

Lament, Prayer and Action

The strands of the readings today call us to three actions, lament, prayer and action. With so many different challenges facing us – how do we pray, how should we act? The goal of our prayers and our actions should be this: we should be headed toward God's shalom – toward God's realm of peace with justice that includes all of creation. That is the big picture. God's shalom is life in all its fullness – a "community that has enough to care for all of its members, that is safe from major threats, that is economically sufficient, that is in harmony with the natural world, and that embodies justice for all." (Peter Sawtell)

Shalom is not found in individual prosperity – it is found in community, in the collective wellbeing of the web of life. It is not about personal wealth, but about common good. And so we lament where shalom is not present – the water crisis, the environmental degradation, the abject poverty faced by so many. We pray



for shalom to come – justice, clean water, safe on earth as it is in heaven.
living spaces and protection of eco-systems.
And we act that God's kingdom may come here

Sermon: Rev Dr Rachel Mash, adapted from Word and Worship 2018/2019

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LITURGICAL MATERIAL FOR WEEK FOUR

GATHERING

Introduction: Our theme of “Hear the cry of the Earth and the Cry of the Poor” this week reflects the link between poverty and environmental challenges. A collection of non perishable foods could be taken and placed around the altar for distribution to the needy.

Penitence

Prayer of Confession

Lord, you have given us a world
full of rich resources to feed us all
And to provide us with all that the
body and mind could need.
Yet, the poor are still with us,
deprived of food, of homes,
of education and dignity; deprived of
healing and of hope.
Forgive our inhumanity.
Forgive our selfishness and greed.
Forgive our church life and our home life.
Forgive us for leaving Christ unfed, unhoused,
without healing and without hope.
Forgive us as we bring ourselves and our
possessions back to you,
In Christ's name.

Amen. ^x

Creed

O God, the source of our being
and the goal of all our longing,
we believe and trust in you.
The whole earth is alive with your glory,
and all that has life is sustained by you.
We commit ourselves to cherish your world,
and to seek your face.

O God, embodied in a human life
we believe and trust in you.

Jesus our brother, born of the woman Mary,
you confronted the proud and the powerful,
and welcomed as your friends
those of no account.

Holy Wisdom of God, firstborn of creation,
you emptied yourself of power,
and became foolishness for our sake.
You laboured with us upon the cross,
and have brought us forth
to the hope of resurrection.
We commit ourselves to struggle against evil,
and to choose life.

O God, life-giving Spirit,
Spirit of healing and comfort,
of integrity and truth,
we believe and trust in you.
Warm-winged Spirit, brooding over creation,
rushing wind and Pentecostal fire,
we commit ourselves to work with you
and renew our world. ^{xi}

RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD

Prayers of the People

May the oppressed people and those who oppress
them, free each other.

May those who are handicapped, and those who
think they are not, help each other.

May those who need someone to listen touch the
hearts of those who are too busy.

May the homeless bring joy to those who open
their doors reluctantly.





May the lonely heal those who think they are self sufficient.

May the poor melt the hearts of the rich.

May seekers for truth give life to those who are satisfied that they have found it.

May the dying who do not wish to die be comforted by those who find it hard to live.

May the unloved be allowed to unlock the hearts of those who cannot love.

May prisoners find true freedom and liberate others from fear.

May those who sleep on the streets share their gentleness with those who cannot understand them.

May the hungry tear the veil from the eyes of those who do not hunger after justice.

May those who live without hope cleanse the hearts of their brothers and sisters who are afraid to live.

May the weak confound the strong and save them.

May violence be overcome by compassion.

May violence be absorbed by men and women of peace.

May violence succumb to those who are totally vulnerable.

That we may be healed

Amen ^{xii}

SENDING OUT

May God bless you with **discomfort** at easy answers, half-truths, and superficial relationships, so that you may seek truth boldly and love deep within your heart.

May God bless you with holy **anger** at injustice, oppression, and exploitation of people, so that you may tirelessly work for justice, freedom, and peace among all people.

May God bless you with the gift of **tears** to shed for those who suffer from pain, rejection, starvation, or the loss of all that they cherish, so that you may reach out your hand to comfort them and transform their pain into joy.

May God bless you with enough **foolishness** to believe that you really can make a difference in this world, so that you are can do what others claim cannot be done to bring justice and kindness to our children's children and the poor. ^{xiii}





WEEK FIVE

The Curse of Affluence

Jeremiah 32:1-3a, 6-15	Economic greed and environmental degradation go hand in hand
Psalms 91:1-6, 14-16	We do not lose hope because we know that God is our keeper
1 Timothy 6:6-19	We are called to challenge the consumer lifestyle
Luke 16:19-31	God is on the side of the poor

COLLECT

Loving God

you created a world with enough for all our need, but not enough for all our greed

Help us to challenge structures of injustice

to commit ourselves to stand in solidarity with the poor

and to bring hope to those who are sinking in despair

through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour

Amen



SERMON

Introduction

The story of Lazarus and the rich man is a living parable. According to a report just released by the World Bank South Africa is the most unequal society in the world. “After nearly two decades of progress following the abolishment of apartheid, South Africa’s societal gains are now deteriorating. Most worryingly, the gap between the rich and poor has worsened for this upper-middle-income country—71% of wealth is now held by a 10% elite; the bottom 60% of the population hold just 7% of assets—making South Africa the most unequal country in the world. The triple challenge the report describes—poverty, unemployment, and inequality—is a toxic mix for health. The warning signs for a future health crisis are here: 39% of South Africans live in overcrowded housing. Food security, stunting, and child malnutrition are worsening since 2012”.

“There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man’s table.” Luke 16:19-20

Jeremiah 32:1-3a, 6-15

For those who live in comfort, complacency is a special temptation. We can sink into a lethargy that says all is well, or at least not too bad. Meanwhile the environmental situation is rapidly deteriorating with huge implications for the poorest of the poor and vast numbers of God’s creatures. The starting point for those who are affluent is to open our ears to God’s voice and our eyes to the real world around us.

Jeremiah 32:1-3a, 6-15 gives us a divine perspective on possessions. Jeremiah is being held prisoner by King Zedekiah. Jerusalem is under siege and Jeremiah is unflinchingly prophesying God’s coming judgement. And then Jeremiah’s cousin comes to him with a business proposition. He is being given the opportunity to buy a piece of land from his uncle in his home village.

Israel had property laws (Leviticus 25:25) which aimed both to prevent extremes of wealth and poverty, and also to protect family inheritance. And so, Jeremiah was asked to purchase a field from his uncle. Even though he is prophesying destruction, he purchases the land in a powerful symbolic action that shows Jeremiah’s faith in God’s future plans. He believes that judgment is coming, and yet he also believes in redemption beyond the disaster. From this we can draw hope. While corporate greed, corruption and individual greed are the prominent characteristics of society – there is little hope of ecological flourishing or the wellbeing of all.

Jeremiah reminds us of the Biblical view of wealth – there were laws in place to prevent the build-up of wealth over many generations. The Jubilee principle was a way of redistributing wealth. The Bible principles of Jubilee encourage us to look at what restitution might mean for us. Inequality has developed over many generations. The children of the rich inherit: a good education, access to transport, networks of influence which makes job seeking easier, access to resources such as internet, and wealthy relatives who can assist with down payments or inherited money from family members. The wealthy gain interest from the banking system, the poor pay interest.

Wealth (from stocks and shares) comes with an environmental cost, often borne by those in the



poorest communities. A share in a coal mining company contributes to air pollution related health issues in local communities.

Restitution is a key component of justice, which we understand as the restoration of right relationships between ourselves, other people, and our environment, in which there is enough for everyone and no one goes without, and the dignity of every human being is revered. Our actions through generations have increased patterns of injustice, increased poverty and caused great environmental degradation. For this we make restitution, following the Biblical Jubilee principles.

Many churches are involved with great love and compassion in acts of charity: food donations, winter clothes drives, Christmas gifts. These actions are often: once off, non –relational, giving of surplus, giving what the giver thinks the person needs. Charity does not look at long term solutions. Restitution is long term, relational, potentially costly and developed in conversation with those to whom restitution is being made. Restitution, unlike charity, is:

- “Highly relational;
- Potentially costly;
- Long-term;
- Developed in conversation with those toward whom restitution is being made” (Restitution foundation)

Psalm 91:1-6, 14-16

This beautiful Psalm reminds us that whatever our fears may be, God will protect us. In Cape Town after 3 years of drought the fears of Day Zero when all the taps would be turned off woke many people up to the reality of environmental challenges.. Many people now feel anxious about the future of the Earth. The Psalm

has a wonderful picture of a chick being kept safe under the shadow of its mother's wings. One imagines an eagle's nest high up on the mountain. The chick may fear being left alone and being attacked by a predator, but once their parent returns they feel safe and secure. Just as with the story of Jeremiah who bought a field trusting in future redemption, we know that God's plan ultimately will be fulfilled “I will show my salvation”

1 Timothy 6: 6-19

1 Timothy 6:6-19 also speaks into the danger of setting our hearts on wealth as a life goal. Instead we should aim at contentment (6-9). Our current economic system creates insatiable demand and continuous consumption. Happiness does not come from having more, but from desiring less. Consumerist materialism in a world of limited resources is destroying the planet. There is enough for our need, but not for our greed. Rather than aiming for more and more, those who have assets are encouraged to use them creatively and generously, “be rich in good works” (17-19).

Luke 16:19-31

The story of Lazarus and the rich man has a similar warning to the rich. The rich man displays all the characteristics that 1 Timothy condemns – pride and living the ‘good life’ through luxury and selfish ease. He ignores the poor man living at his gate, hungry, ragged and sick. After he dies, he still has no respect for Lazarus, he asks Abraham to send him if he were his slave (24, 27).

This is a very harsh story. The rich man had no excuse of saying “I didn’t know” for Lazarus sits at his very gate. In the afterlife he will suffer



endless pain. Why can his family not be saved? They also know the situation; they are rich and know of the poverty of others and do nothing. They know the words of the prophets about poverty and injustice. If Lazarus was sent back to them, they would only chase him away.

The story of Lazarus shows us that in our culture we separate ourselves from suffering, we build security fences and keep poor people away. But the reality is that we are locking the suffering out and also ourselves in. The richest communities are the most isolated. These patterns are destroying community. Sunday morning is the most segregated hour in South Africa.

Lazarus is the only person in all of Jesus' parables who has a name. And that is significant – poverty is not “them out there” it is people with names, and children and stories and talent and resources to enrich others. The rich man is not given a name. We know he is a religious man for he does call out to Father Abraham for help, but he had locked the poor out of his life. The challenge for us is to rewrite the end of the story, to break down the barriers and to get to know the names and faces of those outside of our comfort zones.

When Jesus says, ‘The poor will always be with you’ (John 12:8). He is not saying – there will always be poverty so we don't need to worry about it. He is quoting from the Torah :”For the poor you will always have with you in the land. Therefore I command you, ‘You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in your land.’ (Deuteronomy 15:7-11). What he is saying is the poor will always be with you – so open your hands to give. The poor should always be with us, in our prayers, in our giving, in our decision making, in our social networks. If the poor are not part of your life and ministry and parish priorities then Jesus challenges you – the poor should always be with you.

This passage makes it clear that it is not ok for churches to accept the status quo. We must be on the side of the poor and disadvantaged and be the voice for the voiceless. As followers of Christ, we are challenged to make a preferential option for the poor, namely, to conditions for marginalized voices to be heard, to defend the defenceless, and to assess lifestyles, policies and social institutions in terms of their impact on the poor.

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LITURGICAL MATERIAL FOR WEEK FIVE

GATHERING

Our theme for this week focuses on inequality and the impact on the Earth of our consumerist society. The youth and Sunday School can prepare contrasting posters with different lifestyles.

Penitence

All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. The hatred which divides nation from nation, race from race, class from class,

FATHER FORGIVE

The covetous desires of people and nations to possess what is not their own,

FATHER FORGIVE

The greed which exploits the work of human hands and lays waste the earth,

FATHER FORGIVE

Our envy of the welfare and happiness of others,

FATHER FORGIVE

Our indifference to the plight of the imprisoned, the homeless, the refugee,

FATHER FORGIVE

The lust which dishonours the bodies of men, women and children,

FATHER FORGIVE

The pride which leads us to trust in ourselves and not in God,

FATHER FORGIVE

Be kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. ^{xiv}

PROCLAIMING GOD'S WORD

Creed

I have faith in God, the Almighty
who created heaven and earth
and who wishes to save the world
against our foolishness and megalomania.
I have faith in the spirit
And the might of our community
Which enables and protects life
Which stands up against lethal threat
And paralysing helplessness.
And in Jesus Christ, our brother and Son of God
Who grounds heaven
And links heaven to earth
Who suffered from our weakness
Who was crucified by our missing faith
Who died of our paralysing fear
Who was buried under our indifference
Down to the kingdom of the mighty
Who rises among us with every new hope
With every drop of good water
With every breath of healthy air
With every flower in full blossom
And he will separate those
Who practise death and those
Who answer for life ^{xv}

RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD

Prayers of the People

One: O God of all people,
we come humbly before you

All: In you we place our hope

One: We ask for courage to face the past

All: Our hope is in you

One: For the actions and attitudes of restitution

All: Our hope is in you



One: With words that do not result in action

All: We are no longer satisfied

One: For excuses and reluctant leadership

All: They are not enough

One: With government programmes alone

All: They are not enough

One: For accusations, fear and blame

All: We repent Lord

One: For our forgetfulness and short memory

All: Forgive us Lord

One: For demanding that those who
have been hurt bear so much

All: Forgive us Lord

One: For those us who have
grown up after Apartheid

All: We offer you our privilege

One: For those of us who
were complicit with Apartheid

All: We have considered our ways

One: For those of us who were
dishonoured by Apartheid

All: We open our hearts to true healing

One: Grant us, Lord God, a vision of South Africa

All: As your love would have it

One: A South Africa where the weak are protected ,.

All: And none go hungry or poor

A South Africa where the riches
of creation are shared

All: And everyone can enjoy them

One: A South Africa where
different races and cultures

All: Live in harmony and mutual respect

One: A South Africa where peace
is built with justice

All: And justice is guided by love

One: Give us the inspiration
and courage to build it

All: Through Jesus Christ our Lord. ^{xvi}

SENDING OUT

May God give bread to those who are hungry
May God give a hunger for justice to those who
have bread and may the blessing of the Creator
God the Eternal Father the Risen Son and the
promised Holy Spirit bless you that you might be
a blessing to others today and always

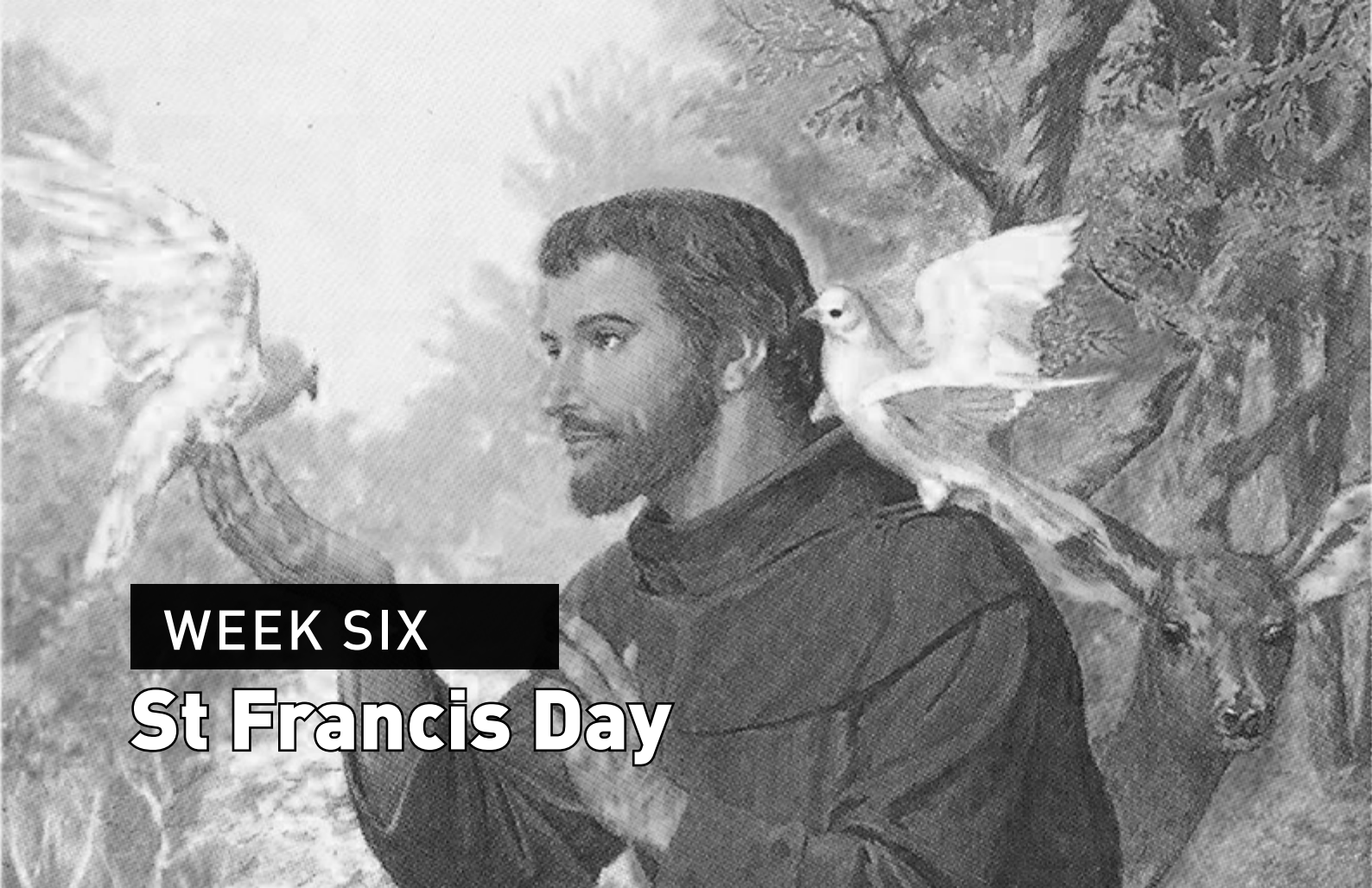
Amen ^{xvii}

MULTIMEDIA

This video , although from a US context, is a good
discussion starter

[https://www.youtube.com/
watch?v=vwx5lvypC5Q](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vwx5lvypC5Q)





WEEK SIX

St Francis Day

Lamentations 1: 1-6	If we fail to change our lifestyle the consequences are severe
Psalms 137	We hear the cries of those who have been separated from their homes
2 Timothy 1: 1-14	How can we live a Christ-like life in a consumerist world?
Luke 17: 5-10	We are called to act for the renewal of Creation



SERMON

Introduction

Today's service focuses on the life and ministry of St. Francis of Assisi. Francis was born in Italy, in 1181 AD, into a wealthy family. His father was a wealthy cloth merchant and made frequent trips to France, and their family life was lived amongst the bourgeoisie of the day. Growing up Francis received elite schooling and as a young man was known for his flamboyant lifestyle and extravagance. As a young man, St. Francis enduring a prolonged period of illness during which he would spend time in the forests and caves surrounding Assisi and it is here that he is believed to have received a vision in a dream. Francis was convinced that he was called to follow a life of poverty, in following the way of Jesus. Francis would later give back all his belongings to his father, including the clothes in his back, and choose instead to live amongst the lepers. Francis was known for preaching not only to people but also to nature, as seen in one of his most well-known writings, The Canticle to Brother Sun.

Lamentations 1: 1-6

The prophet Jeremiah laments the fall of the once great city of Jerusalem. The city was once was the home of many and a favourite amongst travellers is now empty. A great, autonomous city is now subject to others. A city once characterised by joy and is now known for its weeping. The people of the city, who saw themselves as God's chosen, and thus set apart from other nations, now live amongst other nations, away from the symbols that were to remind them that they are God's covenant people.

Jeremiah was sent to the people of Jerusalem to prophesy that God would bring calamity upon them if they did not obey God's commandments. The people of Israel ignore the prophet's calls resulting in the destruction of their city and their enslavement by the Babylonians. Today there are many in our world working tirelessly in the advocacy for our care of creation. Resource into the cause of climate change has concluded that it is no longer in doubt that human activity is the primary cause of climate change. We are being called to live our lives in such a way that the earth is able to recover. Our failure to do so might lead to our lamenting at the destruction of the places we call home.

Psalms 137

This Psalm captures the spirit of the Israelites in captivity in Babylon. From the first verse see the posture of sitting, an indication of the sorrowful mood that they are in. The rivers of Babylon as a location likewise make it clear that they are away from the promised land and living in a foreign land. They have moved from the known to the unknown This Psalm is a lament of the people of Israel who are captive in Babylon. They are separated from the places and worship and long for the temple and the gathering of the community of faith. The Psalmist however is clear that they although they are being mocked by their capturers and feel the separation from their homeland, their connect to God remains and this is what give them the strength to face what life throws at them.

As we remember St. Francis today and we see the separation of the people from the promised land, it serves as a symbol of how far humanity has moved from being connected to creation. Our care for animals has been broken, as we see in the poaching of rhinos, to the extent that the



world's last male Northern White Rhino has died and that subspecies now faces extinction. The ongoing battle between humans and baboons in the Western Cape is another example of the inability of humans and animals to co-exist. Our recent water crises around the country was a reminder to consider how we use our natural resources.

Today we also consider that St. Francis chose to live amongst those who were removed from their homes to live in leper colonies. This Psalm also helps us to consider those who have been moved off their land for political and/or economic reasons and yearn to return. We hear the cries of those who long for their land to be restored. We think of the many in our country who have been moved off the land and have a desire to return. As we hear the cries of the people of Israel as they remember Zion, we remember all those who are weeping as they remember where they have come from and we pray for the landless throughout the country and those who are climate refugees

We live in a world that is suffering because of human greed. So many of the problems we face are as a result of being disconnected from creation, from God, from each other and even from ourselves. Our two readings from the Old Testament tell of the disconnect between the people of Israel and the promised land. This disconnection is seen in the destruction of the land (Lamentations 1: 1-6) and is heard in the cries of the people (Psalm 137). The Biblical disconnection comes after God has warned His people to turn from their ways or else face his anger. But the people refused, knowing that they are God's own people and God would always act on their behalf.

2 Timothy 1: 1-14

In this passage St. Paul reminds Timothy of his personal suffering for the sake of the Gospel. In much the same way St. Francis believed that his calling to a life of poverty was to follow the example of Christ. St. Francis, though born into a wealthy family believed that he should give up all and follow Christ, who emptied himself and took the form of a servant. The examples of Jesus, Paul and Francis call us to consider what it means to be Christian in a world driven by greed and a desire for possessions. How do we live Christ-like lives in our time?

As we consider St. Paul's sufferings, we are reminded also of all others who suffer. Our water crisis in particular called on us to consider how we would live on limited resources. But there are many in our country for whom living on limited resources is a reality. There are many for whom piped water and proper sanitation remain a dream. There are also those who breathe in polluted air, eat food that is not sufficiently nutritious and live in areas prone to extreme natural events that could lead to disasters. Can we also consider those for whom the environment therefore means illness and destruction?

Luke 17: 5-10

There are two main themes in today's Gospel; faith and service. In the first two verses we have a dialogue between Jesus and his disciples in which the disciples ask Jesus to increase their faith. This is an honourable request because they realise their need only for faith but for ever increasing faith. Jesus tells them that if we have true faith we could perform mighty works. It is interesting that this request does not come when they are in trouble and are seeking faith so that they may endure, but rather they are



seeking a growing faith for the living out of their lives. Jesus tells them faith the size of a mustard seed is sufficient to move a mountain. All things are possible to those who put their faith in God.

In the next five verses Jesus poses a question. He asks his disciples about their practice of managing their servants. He tells that a servant's duty is to serve and to ensure that the work that has been assigned is carried out. The servant doesn't get to rest until the work is done. Jesus reminds them that when a servant has done their duty they are never thanked for it nor have they done anyone any favours, they are servants and they have served. Our duty, as servants of God is to do the will of the one who calls us. Our service for God is no guarantee that things will work out in our favour or a promise that God owes us something. We are servants.

Christians, God calls on us to be good stewards of God's creation. At this time when so many of the earth's systems are suffering, we are to work for the restoration of creation. It is good to have faith that things will work out, but as St. James reminds us, "faith, if it is not accompanied by works, is dead" (James 2:17). Thus as Christians we should follow the example of St. Francis and

commit ourselves to caring for all that God has placed in our care.

St Francis

The story of St. Francis is the story of a man who had all the material possessions he could ever dream of. His family ensured that he received the best education and he found himself in the company of the elite of his day. Francis only really found himself once he discovered his connection to God and not to things. This connection made Him see himself as connected to those who suffer, to the point that Francis lived in a leper colony in order to be closer to the people of God. Francis also spoke of the elements of nature as being connected to him, calling them Brother Sun and Sister Moon. St. Francis is remembered as the patron saint of the environment, but his true legacy is in showing us the importance of being connected and that this leads us to seeking for God in everything. How can we find God in the people and nature around us? Can we see ourselves as connected to creation and connected to all people? Can we see God in others? And once we do, how does that make us live differently?

Rev Shaun Cozett, adapted from Word and Worship 2018/2019

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LITURGICAL MATERIAL FOR WEEK SIX

GATHERING

Most high, all powerful Lord,

All praise is yours, all glory, all honour, and all blessing.

To you, alone, Most High do they belong.

No mortal lips are worthy to pronounce your name. ^{xviii}

Call to Worship

Lord God: you alone are holy,

you who work wonders!

You are strong, you are great,

you are the Most High,

you are the almighty King,

you, holy Father, King of heaven and earth.

Lord God: you are Three and you are One,

you are goodness, all goodness,

you are the highest Good,

Lord God, living and true.

You are love and charity, you are wisdom,

you are humility, you are patience,

you are beauty, you are sweetness,

you are safety, you are rest, you are joy,

you are our hope

and our delight.

You are justice, you are moderation

you are all our wealth

and riches overflowing.

You are beauty, you are gentleness,

you are our shelter, our guard

and our defender,

you are strength, you are refreshment,

you are our hope.

you are our faith.

you are our love,

you are our complete consolation,

you are our life everlasting,

great and wonderful Lord,

all powerful God, merciful Saviour!

Amen. ^{xix}

Form of Confession

Created God, you created the world and commanded us to till and keep it. Lord, where we have failed to care, have mercy.

Lord have mercy

Jesus our redeemer, you commanded to us to love one another as you loved us. Christ, where we have failed to love, have mercy.

Christ have mercy

Holy Spirit our sustainer, you have empowered us for your service. Lord, where we have failed to serve, have mercy.

Lord have mercy

May Almighty God; Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer, have mercy on us, forgive us our sins and keep us in eternal life. **Amen**

PROCLAIMING GOD'S WORD

Prayer for illumination

Most high, and glorious God,

Enlighten the darkness of my heart

And give me, Lord, a correct faith

A certain hope, and perfect charity,

Sense and knowledge

So that I may carry out Your holy and true command.

Amen ^{xx}





RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD

Prayers of the People

O God, we give you thanks for the life and ministry of your servant Francis, we praise you for his dedication to his calling and the living out of his faith. Help us to hear and discern our own calling and give us the strength and live for you.

Lord in your mercy

Hear our prayer

Creator God, we give you thanks for your creation, which St. Francis loved so much. Help us, like him, to see ourselves as part of your creation and apart from it. And may we work tirelessly for the care of the earth, our common home.

Lord in your mercy

Hear our prayer

God of our lives, we hold before you the inequalities in our world. Help to follow the example of St. Francis and give to those in need. Teach us to be content with what we have and to find our true wealth in you.

Lord in your mercy

Hear our prayer

God our healer, as St. Francis dedicated himself to living amongst the Lepers, open our eyes to see those who are cast out from society. Bring healing to all who suffer and make wounded relationships whole.

Lord in your mercy

Hear our prayer

Loving God, receive our prayers offered with great humility, that having done all that you call us to do we may seek not to be glorified, but acknowledge that we are merely your servants. **Amen.**

CELEBRATING AT THE TABLE

Sharing of the Peace

Hear the words of St. Francis: "Happy are those who endure in peace, for by you, Most High, will they be crowned"

Proper Preface

And now we give you thanks for the glorious pledge of the hope of our calling which you have given us in your saints; that, following their example and strengthened by their fellowship, we may run with perseverance the race that is set before us, and with them receive the unfading crown of glory.

Invitation to Communion

Draw near and receive this wonderful Sacrament; a memorial of Christ's Passion, grant we beseech Thee, come to experience the Fruit of His redemption, who lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen. ^{xxi}

SENDING OUT

Thanksgiving for Worship

We adore you, Lord Jesus Christ, here and in all Your churches in the whole world, and we bless you, because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world. ^{xxii}

Prayer of Self-Offering

Almighty Father,
as you have sent your Son into the world
to be our example
and your Holy Spirit to be our inspiration
send us into the world to work for peace and justice.



Benediction

May God bless you with **discomfort**. Discomfort at easy answers, half truths and superficial relationships, so that you may live deep within your heart.

May God bless you with **anger**. Anger at injustice, oppression and exploitation of people, so that you may work for justice, freedom and peace.

May God bless you with **tears**. Tears to shed for those who suffer from pain, rejection, starvation and war, so that you may reach out your hand to comfort them and turn their path into joy.

May God bless you with **foolishness**. Enough foolishness to believe that you can make a difference in this world, so that you can do what others claim cannot be done. ^{xxiii}

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Green Anglicans

Anglican Church of
Southern Africa
Environmental Network
www.greenanglicans.org



**SEASON OF
CREATION**

www.seasonofcreation.org

NEXT GENERATION RISING

Climate change is already having devastating effects on Southern Africa, with many people having died, been displaced from their homes and lost their crops in Mozambique and South Africa, after both South Africa and Namibia suffered from drought.

Scientists tell us we have only 12 years to reduce our carbon emissions by 50%. Since 1970 we have wiped out 60% of the wildlife populations on the earth. As adults we confess that we have failed to be the stewards God called us to be.

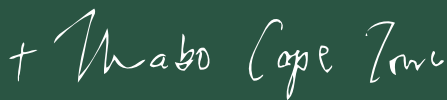
Our complicity in the destruction of the planet will be “visited upon the children, upon the third and the fourth generations” (Exodus 20:5) This is an injustice that we have inflicted on our younger generations.

Moses was called to bring his people out of Egypt, and then God commissioned a new youth leader, Joshua. On the banks of the Jordan river, God told Joshua: “Be strong and bold. For you have been chosen to bring the people into the new land, not I.”

Now we need to acknowledge in Southern Africa today that the leadership of the environmental movement is coming from young people. This manual aims to empower them with theology and practical actions to take the Green Anglicans movement into every community and parish throughout our Province.

Be strong, bold and very courageous, and take the lead!

God bless you.



The Most Reverend Thabo Makgoba
Archbishop of Cape Town

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