

JAEI

February 2020 Environmental Prayer Diary

(The purpose of this Prayer Diary is to provide subjects for your reflection and prayer as the Spirit moves you)

Saturday

May this new month bring fresh air to your soul
As you breathe in God's life anew.
May a sunrise of sweet promises
Dawn across your mind with dreams that come true.

May the love of your heavenly Father Blow like a breeze through your cares And the winds of eternities calling Lift you high to find vision again.

Sunday

World Wetland Day

2 Wetlands and Biodiversity, theme for 2020

Wetlands – areas of marsh, peatland, swamp - are considered the most biologically-diverse of all ecosystems. Wetlands are a critical part of our natural environment. They protect our shores from wave action, reduce the

impacts of floods, absorb pollutants and improve water quality. According to IUCN's Freshwater Biodiversity Unit, an estimated 126,000 described species rely on freshwater habitats, including species of fishes, molluscs, reptiles, insects, plants, and mammals. They provide habitat for animals and plants and many contain a wide diversity of life, supporting



plants and animals that are found nowhere else.

However, wetlands degradation and destruction is occurring more rapidly than in any other ecosystem. ... Wetlands destruction has increased flood and

drought damage, nutrient runoff and water pollution, and shoreline erosion, and triggered a decline in wildlife populations.

- We can all do our bit to protect our precious wetlands
- Report illegal activity such as filling, clearing, or dumping in wetlands to relavant authorities.
- keep surfaces that wash into storm drains clean of pet faeces, toxic chemicals, fertilizers, and motor oil, which eventually wash into our wetlands, polluting them.
- Plant only local species of trees, shrubs and flowers to keep the ecological balance of local wetlands.
- Use phosphate-free laundry and dishwasher detergents. Phosphates help algae grow, which can suffocate aquatic life.



- Use paper and recycled products made from unbleached paper.
- Reduce, reuse and recycle household items and waste.

Prayer:

God of rain and river, of stream and storm, of sea and silent pools, of waterfall and waterhole, of wells and waves. of aquifer and aqueducts, Hear us as we pray for water fresh and pure for all. And guide us to use your water wisely and well, ensuring that all your creation can share in your bounty.

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Monday

We pray for the devastating Australian bushfires

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"We pray for gentle rains, and no wind; we pray for cooling skies, and water in abundance; we pray for the burning land, we pray for the four legged, and the winged, for the koala and the kangaroo, and all of their neighbours; we pray for the people who are trapped, for the people who have lost their homes, for the firefighters and the first responders, for the exhausted and the tapped out, we pray for Australia,

from east, to south, to west, to north, and all the places in between.

In this world of changed and changing climate, God, we ask that you would help us to help those who are in immediate danger; may we use what we have to help and to heal then call us to repent of all the ways we continue to make this world a place of death, rather than life.

Help us, O God... because we don't seem to be able to do it on our own.

In Christ's name. on the wings of the Holy Spirit, we pray. Amen."

From the moderator of the United Church of Canada



There is a Salt Flat in Bolivia that turns into a mirror, and reflects Tuesday 4 the sky during the rainy season. It is known as "The border between Heaven and Earth". One Sunday morning at a small southern church, the new pastor called on one of his older deacons to lead in the opening prayer. The deacon stood up, Wednesday 5 bowed his head and said, "Lord, I hate buttermilk." The pastor opened one eye and wondered where this was going. The deacon continued, "Lord, I hate lard." Now the pastor was totally perplexed. The deacon continued, "Lord, I ain't too crazy about plain flour. But after you mix 'em all together and bake 'em in a hot oven, I just love biscuits." "Lord help us to realize when life gets hard, when things come up that we don't like, whenever we don't understand what You are doing, that we need to wait and see what You are making. After you get through mixing and baking, it'll probably be something even better than biscuits. Amen." And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. Louisa United Methodist Church "The earth will not continue to offer its harvest, except with **Thursday** faithful stewardship. We cannot say we love the land and then take steps to destroy it for use by future generations." John Paul II Reflection: **Friday** 7 Pope Francis - Laudato Si 39. "The replacement of virgin forest with plantations of trees, usually monocultures, is rarely adequately analysed. Yet this can seriously compromise a biodiversity which the new species being introduced does not accommodate. Similarly, wetlands converted into cultivated land lose the enormous biodiversity which they formerly hosted. In some coastal areas the disappearance of ecosystems sustained by mangrove swamps is a source of serious concern. Prayerfully consider this

Saturday	8	"I am a feather on the breath of God." Hidagord of Bingen
Sunday	9	Loving Father, give us a deeper understanding of your purposes, that we may be steadfast amid the turmoil of our times. May our faith never fail, nor our love grow cold, nor our hope become faint. Help us to fix our eyes on Jesus, who for our sakes became poor and willingly went to the Cross for our redemption. Amen
Monday	10	"We can say today that man is far too clever to be able to survive without wisdom Now that we have become very successful (in science and technology) the problem of spiritual and moral truth moves into the central position." E.F. Schumacher
Tuesday	11	"I only feel angry when I see waste. When I see people throwing away things we could use." Mother Teresa

Wednesday

Help us Lord

12

Lord God, We thank you for the gift of life. We thank and praise you for the mystery of creation. We know that you are in us, and we in you. Guide us, therefore, in our efforts to hand on the earth to future generations, so that others can seek to understand your will and purpose in the world, bring your love to perfection and magnify your holy name. Help us overcome godlessness with love. Help us support and protect the victims of climate change everywhere; those who've lost their homes or livelihoods to the ravages of famine, fire and flood.

Teach us to live in peace And harmony with all creation. Lord, in your name, Amen.

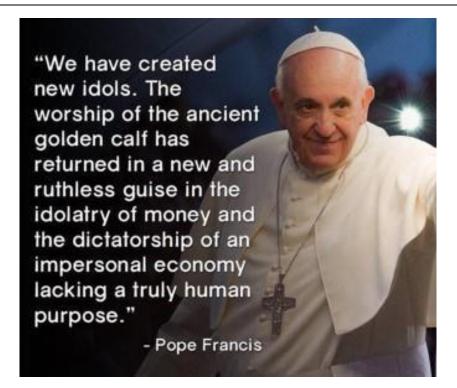
Caring Father, in you we live and move and have our being, we have misused the earth that you have given us, forgive us and help us to take steps to restore your creation. Give us wisdom to manage the use of the world's resources. Father hear us and help us to care.

Christ our Saviour, who restored unity between earth and heaven, teach us to care for your earth, and to be good stewards of all that is in it. May we learn how to live in harmony with your creation, that the earth may bring forth goodness to nourish and renew all who share it. Christ hear us and teach us to care.

Holy Spirit, by your breath the world was created Help us to listen to the groaning of creation. Help us listen to your guidance that we may live gently on earth and renew the face of the earth. Spirit hear us and give us wisdom to care.

Adapted from a prayer from St Alban's Church in Copenhagen.

Thursday 13



Psalm 107:17-32

Friday

- 14
- ¹⁷ Some became fools through their rebellious ways and suffered affliction because of their iniquities.
- ¹⁸ They loathed all food and drew near the gates of death.
- ¹⁹ Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he saved them from their distress.
- ²⁰ He sent out his word and healed them; he rescued them from the grave.
- ²¹ Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for mankind.
- ²²Let them sacrifice thank offerings and tell of his works with songs of joy.
- ²³ Some went out on the sea in ships;

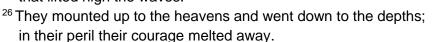
they were merchants on the mighty waters.

²⁴ They saw the works of the LORD,

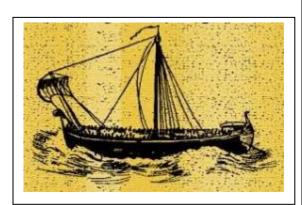
his wonderful deeds in the deep.

²⁵ For he spoke and stirred up a tempest

that lifted high the waves.



- ²⁷ They reeled and staggered like drunkards; they were at their wits' end.
- ²⁸ Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, and he brought them out of their distress.
- ²⁹ He stilled the storm to a whisper; the waves of the sea were hushed.
- ³⁰ They were glad when it grew calm, and he guided them to their desired haven.
- ³¹ Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for mankind.
- ³² Let them exalt him in the assembly of the people and praise him in the council of the elders.



Saturday

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World Pangolin Day

Though many people think of them as reptiles, pangolins are mammals. They are the only mammals wholly-covered in scales and they use those scales to protect themselves from predators in the wild. If under threat, a pangolin will immediately curl into a tight ball and will use their sharp-scaled tails to defend themselves. Pangolins play an important ecological role, providing 'pest' control and improving soil quality. Pangolins can be found in northern KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga, Limpopo and parts of North West.



Aside from being a very unique, insectivorous creature, it sadly the most trafficked mammal in the international illegal wildlife trade. The demand for pangolins comes mostly from China, where pangolin scales are unfortunately believed to be a cure-all of sorts and pangolin flesh is considered a delicacy. In Vietnam, pangolins are frequently offered at restaurants catering to wealthy patrons who want to eat rare and endangered wildlife. There is no evidence to

support claims regarding medicinal properties of pangolin scales or any other part of the pangolin. This enigmatic little animal could go extinct before most people know that it actually exists!

What can we do? ...

- Share pangolin information on your social media networks on World Pangolin Day
- Educate others about pangolins
- Support organisations which are working to protect pangolins
- Inform traditional medicine prescribers that the use of pangolin scales is illegal (and there are no proven health benefits to consuming scales they are made of keratin, just like fingernails!)
- Notify the authorities if you see pangolins for sale at markets or on restaurant menus, or if you know of anyone capturing or possessing pangolins.

Prayer:

God of all creation, you created animals to roam the earth and fish to fill the seas. We pray for pangolins in South Africa and elsewhere in the world – that they may live in peace in your Creation. We pray for those responsible for poaching and the illegal trade – that they will repent of their ways and protect rather than destroy what you have created. Help us all to live in a way that does not endanger life but cherishes and nourishes the life in and around us. Amen.



Sunday

may be bold to heal and defend the earth around us, and pour your blessing upon the people and organizations working everywhere for the good of the planet.

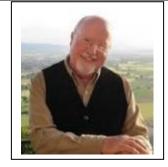
God, Giver of life, Hear our prayer.

Monday

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Nature as a Mirror of God

What some now call creation spirituality, deep salvation, or the holistic Gospel, was voiced long ago by some Eastern fathers, in the spirituality of the ancient Celts, by many of the Rhineland mystics, and surely by Francis of Assisi. Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179) communicated creation spirituality through music, art, poetry, medicine,



gardening, and reflections on nature. She wrote in her famous book, Scivias:

Creator of earth, sea, and sky, kindle the fire of your Spirit within us that we

You understand so little of what is around you because you do not use what is within you.

This is key to understanding Hildegard and is very similar to Teresa of Ávila's understanding of the soul. Without using the word, she recognized that the human person is a *microcosm* with a natural affinity for or resonance with its *macrocosm*, which many call God. Our little world reflects the big world. The key word here is *resonance*. Contemplative prayer allows your mind to *resonate* with what is visible and right in front of you. *Contemplation is the end of all loneliness because it erases the separateness between the seer and the seen.*

Hildegard spoke often of *viriditas*, the greening of things from within, similar to what we now call photosynthesis. She already saw that there was a readiness in plants to receive the sun and to transform it into energy and life. She recognized that there is also an inherent connection between the physical world and the divine Presence. This connection translates into inner energy that is the soul and seed of everything, an inner voice calling you to "Become who you are; become all that you are." This is our "life wish" or "whole-making instinct."

Hildegard is a wonderful example of someone who lives safely inside an entire cosmology, a universe where the inner shows itself in the outer, and the outer reflects the inner, where the individual reflects the cosmos, and the cosmos reflects the individual. Hildegard says, "O Holy Spirit, you are the mighty way in which everything that is in the heavens, on the earth, and under the earth, is penetrated with connectedness, penetrated with relatedness." It is truly a Trinitarian universe, with all things whirling toward one another from orbits, to gravity, to ecosystems, to sexuality.

In another place, Hildegard has God saying:

I have created mirrors in which I consider all the wonders of my originality which will never cease.

Indeed, for Hildegard nature was a mirror for the soul and a mirror for God. This mirroring affects a complete change in consciousness in how most of us see and experience reality. Later, Bonaventure (1217-1274) wrote: "In the soul's journey to God we must present to ourselves *the whole material world*

as the first mirror through which we may pass over to the Supreme [Artisan]." The Dominican Meister Eckhart (1260-1327) said the same: "If humankind could have known God without the world, God would never have created the world."

Creation is not a mere scenic backdrop so humans can take over the stage. Creation is in fact a full participant in human transformation, since the outer world is absolutely needed to mirror the true inner world. There are not just two sacraments, or even seven; the whole world is a sacrament!

Gateway to Silence:

Brother Sun, Sister Moon, help me see God in all things.

From **Richard Rohr's** daily meditations www.cac.org

Tuesday

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SDG Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

Climate change is now affecting every country on every continent. It is disrupting national economies and affecting lives, costing people, communities and countries dearly today and even more tomorrow.



People are experiencing the significant impacts of climate change, which include changing weather patterns, rising sea level, and more extreme weather events. The

greenhouse gas emissions from human activities are driving climate change and continue to rise. They are now at their highest levels in history. Without action, the world's average surface temperature is projected to rise over the 21st century and is likely to surpass 3 degrees Celsius this century—with some areas of the world expected to warm even more. The poorest and most vulnerable people are being affected the most.

Affordable, scalable solutions are now available to enable countries to leapfrog to cleaner, more resilient economies. The pace of change is quickening as more people are turning to renewable energy and a range of other measures that will reduce emissions and increase adaptation efforts.

But climate change is a global challenge that does not respect national borders. Emissions anywhere affect people everywhere. It is an issue that requires solutions that need to be coordinated at the international level and it requires international cooperation to help developing countries move toward a low-carbon economy

Prayerfully reflect on this and what your personal action will be

Wednesday

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"Everything that is in the heavens, on earth, and under the earth is penetrated with connectedness, penetrated with relatedness." *Hildegard of Bingen*



Thursday

20

God of the Glorious Sunshine

God of the glorious sunshine, God of refreshing rain, Whose voice bids earth awaken And clothe itself again. With life of richest beauty, In plant, and flower, and tree; Thou God of light and splendour, We rise and worship Thee.

God of the hill and mountain,
Of valley and of dale,
Whose finger paints the rainbows;
Thy beauties never fail
To raise our souls in wonder,
And turn our thoughts to Thee;
Thou God of living nature,
We stand and worship Thee.

God of the busy daytime,
God of the quiet night,
Whose peace pervades the darkness,
And greets us with the light;
Safe with Thy presence near us,
Wherever we may be,
Thou God, our great Protector,
We love and worship Thee.

God of the whole creation,
God of all life below,
We seek Thy nearer presence,
Thy grander life to know;
When we, Thy heightened splendour,
Thy greater glories see,
Thou God of all creation,
We still shall worship Thee.



(For tune in Midi form - http://www.hymntime.com/tch/htm/g/g/s/ggsunshi.htm)

Friday

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"We need the tonic of wildness—to wade sometimes in marshes where the bittern and the meadow-hen lurk, and hear the booming of the snipe; to smell the whispering sedge where only some wilder and more solitary fowl builds her nest, and the mink crawls with its belly close to the ground. At the same time that we are earnest to explore and learn all things, we require that all things be mysterious and unexplorable, that land and sea be infinitely wild, unsurveyed and unfathomed by us because unfathomable. We can never have enough of nature."

Henry David Thoreau

Saturday	22	God of the seasons turning, another year has come and gone and once again we gather for the Annual Meeting of JAEI To this place we bring all the celebrations and hardships, the joys and the sorrows of the past 12 months. Here we remember the highlights of the year and gather to look forward to what the coming year has in store. We know that it will not always be easy, that life will always have a mixture of easy and difficult. As we meet and discuss the life and work of this part of your family, we pray that you would be a part of our discussion. May your Spirit move in our hearts, opening them to hear what each of us has to offer, bringing light to both possibilities and realities, drawing us always to consider what you would have us be and do in this time and place. Remind us that we are called to be bearers of Christ's life, light, and love to all we meet. Help us to live in such a way that we draw closer to your vision for us and journey faithfully in your Way. In this time together we celebrate the many gifts we all have to offer. Help us offer what we can to your service and your glory, mindful of our great giftedness in so many ways throughout our lives. These things we pray in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, the one we call Christ, in whose name and hope we gather together as a community. Amen.
Sunday	23	Lord Jesus, you have called us to be your witnesses on earth. Help us to proclaim, by word and deed, the message of your love to all humankind, and to declare your lordship over creation and our responsibility as your stewards.
Monday	24	The question is, are we happy to suppose that our grandchildren may never be able to see an elephant except in a picture book? - David Attenborough Wild Heart

Tuesday

25

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27

28

"The human venture depends absolutely on this quality of awe and reverence and joy in the Earth and all that lives and grows upon the Earth. As soon as we isolate ourselves from these currents of life and from the profound mood that these engender within us, then our basic life-satisfactions are diminished. None of our machine-made products, none of our computer-based achievements can evoke that total commitment to life."

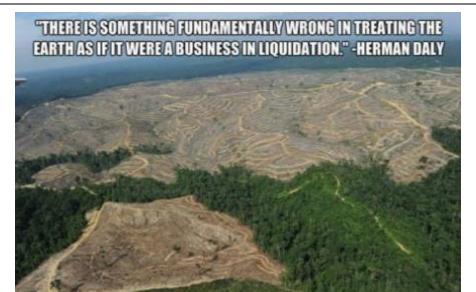
Thomas Berry

Wednesday

"The fundamental criterion for an ecological ethic is not individualistic or commercial. It is deeply spiritual. For, the root of the environmental crisis lies in human greed and selfishness. What is asked of us is not greater technological skill, but deeper repentance for our wrongful and wasteful ways. What is demanded is a sense of sacrifice, which comes with cost but also brings about fulfilment. Only through such self-denial, through our willingness sometimes to forgo and to say "no" or "enough" will we rediscover our true human place in the universe."

His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew

Thursday



Friday

A Frog and a Prayer

The amphibian was lost in the house. It would take a miracle to find it

"Though fall had always been my favourite season, two years ago it was anything but pleasant for me. John, my teenage son from my first marriage, decided to go live with his father in another state. I felt abandoned, as if God paid no attention to my prayers.

One October afternoon, exhausted from worry, I took my youngest, Jacob, to soccer practice. His brother Jordan, the amphibian aficionado, tagged along to scout the area for frogs. He pried the lid from one of the drains. "Mom! I found a frog! Can I keep him?" Before I could say no, he yelled, "Here's another one! And another!" Cupping the frogs in his hands, he ran to show me.

"But, Honey, this is their home. Don't you think they'd be happier here?" I asked.

Jordan persisted. He found an empty Slurpee cup, washed it out and put them inside. Just as practice ended, he made a great discovery. The frogs, originally a light brown, had turned a pale beige, blending to match the inside of the cup.



"These guys are something else," Jordan said excitedly. "What if we keep them for a day, then let them go at the duck pond? There's lots of frogs there."

"Yeah, Mom, could we?" Jacob begged, as he peered into the cup.

Not having the energy to argue, I agreed. On the way home, Jordan noticed distinguishing marks on the frogs' heads. We called the one with a heart-shaped spot Love. The one with a T was Tigger. And the frog with a J-shaped splotch inspired the name Jumper.

At home we transferred Love, Tigger and Jumper to a five-gallon bucket, which the boys furnished with rocks, water, a small branch and as many bugs as they could find. They covered the bucket with plastic wrap, securing the edges with a large rubber band and punching air holes in the middle.

Jordan played with the frogs constantly. I had to tell him to put them back in the bucket before one hopped away. The frogs were only about two inches long and I was afraid they would get lost. When the one-night frog sleepover turned into two, I reminded Jordan that he had said he would release them. "Can we keep them just a little while longer?" he pleaded. On the third night the frogs looked less energetic. "I'll let them go tomorrow," Jordan said. "I promise."

Before school the next morning a cry rang out. "Jumper's missing!" Jordan yelled.

We searched his room high and low to no avail. "What if we put some food and water by the pail in case he comes back?" Jordan suggested.

With three kids, two adults, two dogs and four cats running around our house, I didn't give Jumper good odds for survival (I had the feeling he had made a tasty snack for one of our felines), but I didn't have the heart to tell that to Jordan.

Jumper still hadn't turned up by the time the boys got home from school. *What did I expect?* I thought. *Nothing's gone right for us lately.* We walked to the pond and let Love and Tigger go.

I tried not to mention poor Jumper's fate. As the days passed the boys got absorbed in their activities again. To my relief, they stopped asking about the missing frog. I had enough on my mind with their brother John so far away. I couldn't help worrying about whether he was okay.

One weekend I went on a cleaning binge and saw on the floor a stack of thick books that needed to be re-shelved. I picked up the atlas on top and noticed a brown lump. I bent down to investigate. Oh, no, it looks like a squashed frog. Then one of its legs moved.

"Jordan!" I called. "Look!"

"It's Jumper!" he cried. Quickly, we filled a bowl with water and put Jumper in. Within seconds his body plumped up. I told Jordan that I couldn't imagine how a tiny frog had survived the onslaught of cats, dogs and my vacuum cleaner.

"I prayed for him, Mom," Jordan said. "Isn't that what you're supposed to do?"

The next day we took Jumper to the pond, where a crisp autumn breeze rippled the surface. The boys released him at the water's edge, and he leaped right in.

It was time for me to let go as well, to give my son John room to make his own decisions. Praying for him, as his brother had reminded me, was what I needed to keep doing. God would see to it that he was all right in the end."

Joy Schroeder

Guideposts

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Saturday

Leap Day for Frogs

Frogs are one of the most threatened groups of animals on our planet. Frogs are essential environmental indicators as they are susceptible to water pollution and chemicals. Therefore, if frogs die out, we know our environment and water quality are in serious trouble. Frogs eat thousands of insects and keep certain pests under control. They also form a very important part of the diet of many birds and snakes.

South Africa is blessed to have an amazing diversity of frogs - 125 species in total. Sadly, there are 20 species listed as threatened across SA – vulnerable, endangered and critically endangered. Frogs are mostly endangered due to loss and fragmentation of habitat as well as pollution of fresh water, alien invasive species (both plants and fish) and disease and of course Climate Change isn't helping!

Although none of our local Gauteng frogs endangered, frogs and toads are becoming an increasingly rare sight in urban areas. The Giant Bullfrog, however, is a vulnerable species. There are steps we can take to improve the lot of the frogs:

 Giant Bullfrogs are likely to hop onto roads after rains – be aware of this whilst driving, and if possible, gently remove them out of harm's way.



Giant Bullfrog

- Report illegal electricity connections to the Authorities Frogs have moist skins which are highly conductive if they pass over a live wire. Because illegal connections are not earthed or connected to an earth leakage switch, the wire will remain live and electrocute any animal or possibly a person walking barefoot
- Create suitable frog havens in our gardens. Even a very small pond or water feature will attract frogs
- Indigenous vegetation is important as this will lure insect life for the frogs to eat.
- Frogs play a big role in pest control. Frogs' second biggest threat is pollution, so be aware not to use any harmful garden chemicals or pesticides.

www.jaei.org.za