

Season of Creation B

'OIKOS' - A HOME FOR ALL

Front Cover

DRILLING IN THE KAVANGO BASIN IN NAMIBIA

Speak up for those who have no voice, for justice of all who are dispossessed.

Proverbs 31:8

The cover of the Season of Creation booklet reflects on the call by Anglican bishops to stop drilling in the Kavango Basin in Namibia. The Bishop of Namibia, Luke Pato, called for a petition to halt the drilling by Canadian Company ReconAfrica.

The drilling threatens the Okavango Delta which is a World Heritage and Ramsar Wetland Site, a key biodiversity area and one of the seven natural wonders of Africa. The region is home to the largest remaining population of African elephants, 400 species of birds and is a sanctuary for many other animals.

The oil exploration violates the rights of the San people under the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous people.

Drilling operations threaten to pollute water sources. Water is a scarce and precious commodity in Namibia, the driest country south of the Sahara.

The Bishops of ACSA were supported by Anglican Bishops from Canada and the Anglican Indigenous Network in calling for a halt to the drilling. They called upon the international community to support Namibia and Botswana to develop renewable energy systems and help safeguard the precious Okavango ecosystem.

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FOREWORD

'OIKOS'- A HOME FOR ALL

The theme for this year's international Season of Creation is "Oikos- a home for all". Oikos is a Greek word meaning 'house' or 'home'.

COVID-19 has taught us that we are all interconnected, we share one common home. And our common home is under threat. The web of life is unravelling. In one generation, the population size of mammals, birds, fish and reptiles has dropped by two thirds. By 2050 there will be more plastic in the oceans than fish. Climate Change is pushing millions into poverty. There is no Planet B.

Scientists tell us that this decade is of vital importance for the Planet – we have a very short window of opportunity to keep the rise in temperature to below 1.5 degrees. Otherwise, increasingly severe heatwaves, fires, floods and droughts are coming our way with dire impacts for many countries – we face a climate change catastrophe. Our home is under threat.

This year 2021 is an important year for our common home. Six years ago, 2015 in Paris, 196 nations came together and for the very first time recognised not only that our Common home is at risk from Climate change, but that we must all contribute to protecting it. Each country agreed to make a pledge to cut their carbon emissions. These pledges were a very positive start but were not enough. Even if all nations fulfil their commitments, we will not keep

temperature rise below 1.5 degrees C. This year, in Glasgow, the nations will meet again at COP26 and they must deepen those commitments significantly. What happens in Glasgow may determine what kind of world our children will grow up in...

Please explore the global Ecumenical Season of Creation resource on www.seasonofcreation.org for resources and many ideas of how to get involved!

This Season of Creation we will explore the meaning of the word 'oikos' - our home. It is a word with great significance because oikos is the root word for three important terms: Economy, Ecology and Ecumenical. This points us to the interconnections between God's creation, economic justice and the role of the Church community.

During the five weeks of this Season of Creation we will consider five themes:

Economy - God's rules for our Common Home

Ecology - Protecting our Common Home

Ecumenism - The family of God in our Common Home

Pray and Act for our Common Home

St Francis - Hope for our Common Home

Rev Dr Rachel Mash,

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Sermons:

God's rules for our Common Home

Rev Sabelo Mthimkhulu

Protecting our Common Home

Rev Tim Gray

The family of God in our Common Home

Rev Shaun Cozett

Pray and Act for our common home

Rev Mkhusele Lujabe

Hope for our Common Home

Rev Dr Rachel Mash

Front Cover Illustration: Bob Mash

Layout: John Paul Roberts

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.

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

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...

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

CHURCH IN CREATION

As we move back into our buildings, there are still concerns around health risks with COVID19. What better time than to take our services outside during the month of September and to worship God in Creation. Here are some practical suggestions.

1. REGULAR SERVICE – TAKEN OUTDOORS

If you hold your regular Sunday service outdoors, here are a few things to bear in mind

- **Seating** – if you don't have plastic chairs, ask people to bring camp chairs or sit on blankets
- **Music** – it is often quite hard to sing without accompaniment, so do choose very well known hymns or choruses.
- **Preaching** – sound is likely to be tricky so do keep the preaching very short
- **Prayers/liturgy** – to reduce paper, just print out the responses, or you can have a few copies and ask people to take a photo with their cellphone take the challenge to go as paperless as possible
- **Weather:** for the leader of the service, think about wind – candles will blow out and papers blow around so be prepared! Ask people to dress warmly or bring sunhats as required!
- **Fun and fellowship** – ask families to bring their picnics and combine with some fun!

2. CREATIVE CHURCH IN CREATION

This is an opportunity to be creative and to combine the service with a short walk, visit to a place of beauty or environmental destruction

- Gather for some opening prayers. Keep the responses short so that you don't need extra papers.
- Walk in silence meditating on the prayers, gather together for the readings and prayers, walking in between each section.
- Gather at a site of environmental degradation for the confession
- For the sermon/homily – a short message works best. You can then give people a question to reflect on (can be written on a small piece of paper, or make a few copies for people to copy on their cell phone), and then they find a place on their own to sit to reflect.
- Singing- choose well known songs/hymns/ or a repetitive chant such as Taize music
- Consider those who will need to sit in a chair, and bring a few folding chairs for them
- If you are leading Eucharist in Creation, you will need a backpack to bring all the requirements (unbreakable!)
- End with fellowship snacks and fun!



WEEK 1

Economy: God's rules for our Common Home



SEASON OF CREATION

INTRODUCTION

“OIKOS-NOMOS”- THE RULES FOR THE HOME.

The word ‘economy’ comes from two Greek words – oikos-nomos, which means the rules of the household. Economics is not an academic subject for the experts, for when we speak of God’s economy we are speaking of the rules of the home, the world in which we live, work and die. Economics means the way that people relate to each other and who has control of resources. We might consider economics to be a ‘secular’ issue – but Jesus spoke more about money than he did about prayer. He recognised the power of ‘mammon’ over human beings.

Our current economic system has led to gross inequalities. The world’s richest one percent have more than twice as much wealth as the poorest 6.9 billion people! The South African riots and looting of July 2021 were fuelled by anger at unemployment, hunger and inequality.

Rather than paying more tax, the wealthy and their corporations are paying the lowest levels of tax in decades. As governments cut tax for the rich, they reduce money for vital services like healthcare and education. We now have a globalised competitive market, where businesses, forced to compete internationally, reduce labour costs by all means, in order to provide profit to keep the shareholders rich. Nations which used to have thriving industrial

sectors outsource their production to nations where workers are paid slave salaries. These dynamics lead to poverty and inequality. The rich earn interest from shares and the poor pay interest on ever increasing debt. More and more national income goes to company profits and shareholders with less and less money going to the workers.

Because of the competitive global market, countries and businesses seek permanent growth – leading to devastation of the Earth’s biodiversity and increasing climate change, as more and more fossil fuels are burnt to produce cheap energy.

The oikos-nomos are the rules that should guide our common home in the places where ordinary people live. It is here that the effects of economics are felt most deeply. During COVID casual workers were made destitute while stocks in internet-based companies soared. The economics of God should focus on meeting the needs of the whole family, rather than meeting GDP targets.

Our global economic system must be tested against God’s justice, the lives of the poor and the wellbeing of the earth community – and it is falling short. People and planet must now come before profit.

LITURGY

First Reading

Proverbs 22:1-2; 8-9,
22-23

Psalm 125

Second Reading

James 2:1-10; (11-13),
14-17

Gospel

Mark 7:24-37

COLLECT

**God, Creator of our common home,
your boundless love includes everyone.
Open our hearts and minds to your generous will
that we may proclaim Christ's love and justice
through words and actions.
May we serve the needs of our neighbours
within the Community of all Creation
and may justice flow down like rivers. Amen**

SERMON NOTES

Rev Sabelo Mthimkhulu, Diocese of Natal.

Proverbs 22:1-2, 8-9, 22-23

Rich and poor have this in common:
The LORD is the Maker of them all.
Prov 22: 2

At first glance it seems the writer is suggesting that since God is the God of both rich and poor, it doesn't matter to God whether you suffer in poverty or enjoy great wealth. Too often such ideas can undermine a concern for the poor, leading to questions such as:

- Does God not care whether I walk 10 km to school or get driven for 1 km or less to school?
- Does it not matter whether I use 5 litres of water or 100 litres of water to bath?
- Does it not matter whether I have a smartphone and laptop or have no phone?

However, the writer is alert to what we would today call the prosperity gospel. The writer reminds us that to share one's food with the poor will lead to blessing (v 9). Those who give to the poor (v 9) will gain a blessing, as opposed to those who lend money, causing debt (v 7). The generous one (v 9) is the one with a 'good eye' – meaning a person who

sees and takes note of the needs of the poor. A person with a 'good eye' does not just send a cheque to a faceless cause, they feel the pain and have compassion.

It is interesting to read that the generous soul 'shares' rather than 'gives', this indicates that they may not have an abundance of wealth, but they give because they see the pain of the poor. By inviting the poor to their own table, they are nourishing the dignity of the poor – there is a relationship between them.

In verse 23 the LORD takes up the cause of the poor, God "prosecutes" the legal cases of the poor, seizing the financial assets of the abusive, wealthy defendants.

If we were to follow the rules of God's household, we would know that we are all equal and all made in God's image. God's rules show that those who share are blessed, and that God stands firmly on the side of the poor, and judges those who abuse the vulnerable.

In God's economy there is to be a secure and just home for all.

"Rich and poor have this in common: The LORD is the Maker of them all."

Prov 22: 2

A person with a 'good eye' does not just send a cheque to a faceless cause, they feel the pain and have compassion.

In God's economy there is to be a secure and just home for all.

Psalm 125

The sceptre of the wicked will not remain over the land allotted to the righteous, Psalm 125:3

The psalmist reminds the wicked that their power is temporary at best (v 3) and that evildoers will be banished from the land which is the place of Yahweh's promise (v 5).

Verse 2 shows that God is the sovereign over all of Creation and firmly on the side of those who are exploited, hungry or imprisoned (v 4-5).

God advocates for the alien, the orphan and the widow, these three categories are consistently spoken of in Scripture. These are the vulnerable – not only do they need food security, but they also need advocates to stand up for their rights.

James 2: 1-10, 14-17

If you show special attention to the person wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor person, "Sit on the floor by my feet" James 2:3

The writer offers a direct challenge to the favouritism shown to the wealthy especially in the church. Such favouritism runs counter to the way of God who chose those in the margins, those the community perceives to be "shabby and unclean". We are challenged to join God on the margins, displaying our commitment in action. God turns our social systems upside down, for God has chosen the poor in the world to be rich in faith and to be heirs of the kingdom (v 5).

The common impulse to show generous hospitality to those who

need it the least and can repay it, or to give priority to the wealthy in the church as they are more likely to give more in pledges, goes against the values of the kingdom.

True faith will lead to a difference in lifestyle and change our relationship with our sisters and brothers. Those who are needy and broken show us the good news of the kingdom.

V15-17 is a direct challenge to us in a world of climate injustice. It is not enough to send 'thoughts and prayers' to those impacted by drought or extreme weather events.

Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, 'Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. James 2: 15-17

In a world of climate injustice, where careless use of fossil fuels leads to insecurity, disaster, and suffering for the world's poor and marginalised, we can no longer send 'thoughts and prayers' to those who are victims of drought and extreme weather events. We must do something, take action, both in terms of our carbon footprint, but also to pressurize our church institutions, our politicians and our businesses to hear the cry of the poor and hungry.

"Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court?" v6

For those of us who live comfortable lives, we can no longer live as if we are ignorant of the links between our comforts – built on exploitative and unsustainable economic



God advocates for the alien, the orphan and the widow...

These are the vulnerable – not only do they need food security, but they also need advocates to stand up for their rights.

We are challenged to join God on the margins, displaying our commitment in action.

It is not enough to send 'thoughts and prayers' to those impacted by drought or extreme weather events.

"Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court?" James 2: 6

practices - and the suffering of the poor.

Mark 7: 24-37

“Lord heal the Sick, heal the Poor, heal our Land”

Mark has placed two healing stories together – the Syrophoenician woman’s daughter and the deaf-mute man. These two healings take place as Jesus moves from Jewish territory (the centre) to Gentile territory (the margins).

The Syrophoenician woman and her daughter both inhabit the margins of society: firstly, they are women and secondly, they are gentiles, and as such, considered unclean. Thirdly the daughter has demons which makes her doubly unclean.

Regardless of all these barriers, the woman risks rejection and comes to Jesus and asks him to heal her daughter. Disturbingly, Jesus seems to discourage her, and even refers to her as the “dog”. Not deterred, she politely uses his own argument to convince him “Sir, even the little dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs”.

The deaf-mute man is also a gentile. Once again boundaries are crossed as Jesus spits on his fingers and touches the man’s tongue at a time when saliva was considered unclean. But as was the case with the Jewish leper in Mk 1:40, the contagion is reversed, and the man healed.

These two healings demonstrate that Jesus’ mission reaches both Jews and Gentiles, ‘clean’ and ‘unclean’, but with a particular concern for the marginalized.

God does not conform to the norms

of human institutions, whether religious, social, or political.

Which are the marginalized voices that we should listen to today? Sometimes we are tempted to move directly to advocacy – to speak for the voiceless, which can lead to them being further disempowered. In this gospel we see how Jesus was willing not only to listen to but also to learn from someone who was excluded and marginalized.

These two healing stories show how Jesus heard the voices of the marginalised. Jesus allows himself and his ministry to be transformed by the plea of the Syrophoenician woman. It is hard to understand why he uses such a derogatory word, but in referring to her as the ‘dog’ he is reflecting the views of his society and social group and is challenged by her reply. In the healing of the deaf mute - a man whose voice cannot be heard, Jesus extends the realm of God to the least noticed, those pushed to the periphery. This extension of God’s kingdom to those on the margins serves as a challenging model for the church.

Not only was the Syrophoenician woman a marginalized foreigner, she was also a woman and as such considered second class or less. Across the world, the role of woman and girls as Earth protectors is being recognised. Whereas men often see biodiversity as something to be exploited for cash, women gather herbs for healing, wood for shelter and fuel, as well as plants and herbs for food, and are committed to protecting it. Women are rising and challenging powerful structures, for the sake of their children and for Mother Earth.

Jon Sobrino suggests “from the

“*Jesus was willing not only to listen to but also to learn from someone who was excluded and marginalized.*”

Women are rising and challenging powerful structures, for the sake of their children and for Mother Earth.

world of the poor and the victims can come salvation for a gravely ill civilization". Do we too easily assume that "salvation comes" when we, the church, draw people from the periphery into the centre? Like many models of "development" which assume that the solution to the ills of poverty is to make everyone rich, do we similarly assume that those on the margins just need to be a bit more like us, the mainstream church, in order to be saved? Are we perhaps challenged by these stories of Jesus going into Gentile territory, healing there and, as we read in chapter 8, eventually feeding the Gentile multitude there too?

For all the talk (and some activism) about addressing poverty, many of us still participate day by day in the system that continues to push the poor, the earth and its creatures to the margins. We participate in systems that generate extreme scarcities, dehumanize people, and destroy the community of all Creation.

Is Jesus inviting us to follow him to the margins? Perhaps he is challenging us to allow ourselves to be challenged and transformed, as he was by the Syrophoenician woman. Is he inviting us to participate in the work of healing, not from our comfortable position at the centre, but by going out to the margins?

Many churches are involved in relief efforts, when we hear of a hurricane or drought made worse by climate change, in the face of media photos we give, we donate, and we pray. We must also support developmental projects assisting people to adapt to climate change (for instance water tanks in drought areas, agro-forestry efforts.) But

we also need to challenge the structural injustices and root causes of climate change and environmental degradation. We need to re-activate the prophetic voice of the church, particularly by amplifying the voices of women and youth. And we must be willing to be converted ourselves, by the voices of the marginalised.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu said, "If you are being neutral in the situation of injustice, you have already chosen the side of the oppressor". Are we being called out to a new promised land? – the Land located in the margins?

Archbishop Desmond Tutu said, "If you are being neutral in the situation of injustice, you have already chosen the side of the oppressor".

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FACT SHEET

Covid19

Since COVID19, hunger has increased – globally, 11 people die of hunger every minute (7 people per minute are dying of COVID).

155 million now live in crisis conditions of food insecurity (an increase of 20 million from last year). Globally there has been a 40 % rise in food prices, the highest in a decade

Inequality

The world's richest 1 percent now have twice as much wealth as 6.9 billion people.

Extreme inequality is out of control. Hundreds of millions of people are living in extreme poverty while huge rewards go to those at the very top. There are more billionaires than ever before, and their fortunes have grown to record levels.

Men own 50% more of the world's wealth than women and the 22 richest men have more wealth than all of the women in Africa put together.

According to the World Bank, South Africa has one of the highest most persistent rates of inequality in the world.

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World Bank "World Bank in South Africa" <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/southafrica/overview>

LITURGICAL MATERIAL FOR WEEK ONE

GATHERING IN GOD'S NAME

Kyrie Eleison

You delight in creation, its colour and diversity.
Yet we have misused the earth
And plundered its resources for our own selfish
ends.

Lord, have mercy

Lord have mercy

You have showered us with blessings, but we
have been grudging towards others and lacking in
generosity in word and deed

Christ, have mercy

Christ, have mercy

ACT OF PENITENCE

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 home, 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 and bring ourselves and our
possessions back to you. In Christ's name
Amen

(Season of Creation 4)

RESPONDING TO THE WORD OF GOD

Affirmation of Faith

We are not alone, we live in God's world.
We believe in God:
who has created and is creating,
who works in others and us through the Spirit.
We trust in the Creator.
We are called to be,
to celebrate God's presence,

to live with respect in creation,
to love and serve others,
to seek justice and to resist injustice,
to seek out models for hope and peace
We are not alone.

(United Church of Canada)

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

God of all hopefulness, we bring before You our
concerns for the world and her people.
Gracious God, we turn to You,
**For You are the source of our hope and the
creator of the Kingdom.**

We pray for parents around the world who reach
out in hope for their children. We pray for justice:
when they struggle to provide food for their
families; when they cannot find a place to make a
home for their children.
Gracious God, we turn to You,
**For You are the source of our hope and the
creator of the Kingdom.**

We pray for those who find themselves on the
margins of their societies. We pray for justice:
that they might confront centres of power with the
experience of life on the margins; that they might
be allowed to contribute to the welfare of society;
that we may all be enriched by the insights and
wisdom they bring to our communities.
Gracious God, we turn to You,
**For You are the source of our hope and the
creator of the Kingdom.**

We pray for our common home and all who seek
to ensure its wellbeing.
We pray for justice: that all nations of the world
will work together for the common good of each
person and our planet; that conservation will
enable habitats to flourish while meeting the needs
of local communities; that we each understand
the impact we have upon the earth and adjust our
lifestyle accordingly.
Gracious God, we turn to You,
**For You are the source of our hope and the
creator of the Kingdom.**

We pray for ourselves,
Disturb us and disquiet us with a passion for justice.
Challenge us to grasp a vision of Your new world
and motivate us to act to birth it into being.
Enable us to pass on the gift of hope, so others are
empowered to continue the journey of faith.
Gracious God, we turn to You,
**For You are the source of our hope and the
creator of the Kingdom.**

(Scottish Eco-congregation 2018 adapted)

CELEBRATING AT THE TABLE

Invitation to Communion

As the grain once scattered in the fields
And the grapes once dispersed on the hillside
Are now reunited on this table in bread and wine;
So, Lord may your whole Church soon be gathered
together from the corners of the earth

(Church of England, Common Worship)

SENDING OUT

Loving Father,
your Son gave us this meal as an act of remembrance
of him, and then gave his very self for our salvation.
We thank you for the nourishment we receive at
your table and pray that the strength we receive
here, might give us the courage to share our very
selves with those in need; through the Lord who
shared himself for our sake.

Amen

God the Creator has blessed
you with all that you need in this life:
Go into the world with courage that
you might be the channels through
which the Lord can bring relief to others;
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

MUSIC

Music and Hymns from Climate Sunday

<https://www.climatesunday.org/service-resources>

The Justice song

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IASdERt3-m0>

Beauty for brokenness, Graham Kendrick

<https://youtu.be/pPvioAt5fq4>

Who can sound the depths of sorrow?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MU_Jc8apIEw

Let justice roll like a river

<https://vimeo.com/459812503>

The Kingdom of God is justice and peace (Taize)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T9yjj-nUfFo>

Selection from Methodist Church

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/worship/singing-the-faith-plus/categories/theme/justice-and-peace/>



WEEK 2

Ecology: Protecting our Common Home

SEASON OF CREATION |

16

INTRODUCTION

“OIKOS-LOGIA” THE STUDY OF THE HOME

The word ecology comes from “oikos – logia” - the study of the household. We root our theme in the concept of oikos – home. This points to the integral web of relationships that sustain the wellbeing of the whole Earth. Each creature – not only animals, insects and plants, but also non sentient creatures and minerals form part of this web and contribute to the health of the Earth. The Creation story in Gen 1 reminds us that as humans we were created on the same day as all the animals, we are not separate to this glorious, diverse earth community.

When we look at the words “oikos-logia-ecology” and “oikos-nomos- economy” we see the fundamental connection between Ecology and Economy. “Whatever befalls the earth befalls the children of the earth” (Chief Seattle).

Ecology and Economy are two interrelated perspectives on God’s household of life – oikos. Ecology then is a study of the relationships between creatures and the eco-systems that sustain them.

Do we see a forest as a financial resource – to be cut down - or do we see it as our home, which provides food, shelter, medicine and fuel for the generations to come? The current

economic system which is based on unlimited growth is having a disastrous effect on this earth.

“What went wrong is very clear. It’s humanity-humankind went beyond the boundaries, ate beyond the limits - that is what greed is about and the tragedy with our world today - greed is so systemic, it’s so engraved in the global economies and it’s also bred inequalities and also bred the abuse of the environment, the abuse of nature.” Bishop Zac Niringiye.

“Earth Overshoot Day” marks the tragic day each year when our demand for ecological resources exceeds what Mother Earth can regenerate in that year. Last year it fell on August 22nd, which means that for the last four months of the year we have been stealing resources from the generations to come.

“There is a real danger that we will leave future generations only rubble, deserts and refuse” Pope Francis

COLLECT

**Jesus, redeemer of our common home and
provider for all of creation;
Teach us to value the habitats of all
your creatures given into our care,
so that we can preserve the world in all of its diversity
Inspire us to value your precious gifts
and never to take more than we can give,
For you live and reign in the diversity of
the Blessed Trinity, Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer.
Amen**

LITURGY

First Reading

Proverbs 1: 20-33

Psalm 19

Second Reading

James 3:1-12

Gospel

Mark 8: 27-38

SERMON NOTES

Rev Tim Gray, Diocese of Johannesburg

Proverbs 1:20-33

If ecology is the study of our common home, then we need wisdom to guide us in how to care for it. In the book of Proverbs, Wisdom is personified as a woman, present at and involved in creation (8:22-31).

But since you refuse to listen when I call, and no one pays attention when I stretch out my hand.

Prov 1 : 24

In this passage we see how humans are ignoring the voice of lady Wisdom. The simple (morally immature youth), the mockers (the arrogant and skeptics) and the fools (the immoral) are warned of the consequences of their disregard of her voice. Her advice is readily and traditionally available – her voice is heard in the squares, streets and city entrances. The failure and fall of those who will not respond will be calamitous and distressful. There will be no way out of their predicament and their judgement will be the consequences of their own actions (eating the fruit of their own schemes (Prov 1: 31). The teaching and lesson of these verses

is “the waywardness of the simple will kill them and the complacency of fools will destroy them” (Prov 1:32). We can no longer plead ignorance about environmental destruction, for Wisdom is calling even in the street.

Looming over our planet is a threat of extinction, acknowledged now as a sixth extinction. The Season of Creation is an appeal for new awareness and response. Every sphere of planetary life reveals a human history of selfishness and anthropocentricity. The living soil, the seas, rivers and oceans are being polluted - planetary degradation reveals the extent of the human footprint. Just as the simple, mockers and fools in the Proverbs reading of today, are told by lady wisdom that they will suffer the consequences of their strategies, so that same wisdom calls us to new perspectives in our relationship with the earth. Unless we listen to the voice of wisdom, faith and science, we too will have to endure the consequences of our behavior. Wisdom, known not only in the streets, plazas and city gates, but present at the formation of creation, continues to call us to

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The Season of
Creation is
an appeal for new
awareness and
response.*

listen to her voice. (Proverbs 3:19-20). Clearly, our own mandate as Christians is to care for and nurture Creation.

Wisdom, personified as a woman, one who permeates creation, warns us of the consequences of foolishness, let us not ignore her prophetic voice. Let us be guided by the Wisdom of the Holy spirit, the wisdom we find in science and the wisdom of our ancestors and indigenous peoples. We can see the consequences of our actions. It is time to act!

Psalm 19

Did you know that there are 'two books of God'? God does not only speak to us through the written book of the Bible, but God also speaks to us through creation. We can see this clearly in Psalm 19, which contains two sections.

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech Psalm 19 1-2

In the first section – v 1-6, we see that for the psalmist, the heavens and skies bear testimony to the overwhelming presence of God and declare his glory. Our ancestors recognized the voice of wisdom as inherent in nature. For our psalmist the celestial realm is independent of human language. Inaudibly and uniquely the heavens and the skies declare what they know of God. This section reveals the glory and work of God observed in the wonders of the heaven where knowledge is displayed without words.

The second section 7-14 proclaims the written instructions of the law and their completeness, trustworthiness, rightness as well

as what they produce and inspire in the individual - revival in the soul, wisdom in the simple (vs 7), joy in the heart and light to the eyes (vs 8). The Psalm extols the heart of wisdom which is the fear of the Lord (vs 9) and which is more precious than gold and sweeter than honey (vs 10).

The way the writer puts the two sections next to each other shows the harmony between the glory of creation and the law. The sections represent poems from differing eras, pre and post exilic respectively, and together provide a theological unity. The witness of the heavens to God's authoritative presence in nature and, in the law, testimony to God's historical presence in a covenant people.

The psalmist works from a premise that when each part of creation fulfills its natural role, it utters praise to its creator. The heavens and the skies are not simply memorials to God but a living language declaring God's glory and ability – the work of his hands. The celestial sphere has intrinsic worth and meaning. They have voice and display knowledge. There is a profoundly sacramental quality about the universe – an outward and visible meeting of all that is inward and divine – God's glory is evident, and the universe proclaims its mystery. We come away not only having seen celestial objects but with a sense of the divine.

As Martin Luther said "God writes the Gospel not in the Bible alone, but also on trees, and in the flowers and in clouds and stars"

God speaks to us through nature – the question is: are we listening?

“Did you know that there are ‘two books of God’? God does not only speak to us through the written book of the Bible, but God also speaks to us through creation.”

“God writes the Gospel not in the Bible alone, but also on trees, and in the flowers and in clouds and stars”

Martin Luther

James 3: 1-12

The context of this passage is the risk posed by self-appointed teachers. Teachers who are not qualified to teach and whose indiscipline and self-interest is able to cause communal disturbance and spiritual damage. The tongue is the metaphor used by the author for speech but in the sense that it is the agent of the person who is speaking. Ultimately the passage is an observation and comment of human willfulness which can manifest both good and bad things through what they say.

The tongue operates much as a bridle does to control a horse or the rudder to steer a ship (vss 3 and 4). It is small but influential. Negatively it can be destructive. It can be the spark initiating a raging forest fire. It can be the all-possessing evil which can consume an individual. For the person carrying the image of God it should not be like this. The brother cannot carry this duality any more than fresh and salt water can emerge from the same spring, figs come from olive trees or grapes from a fig tree (vss 10-12).

As faith leaders we are called to pass on knowledge and wisdom. Our tongues can do great good, but also great harm if we pass on fake news and incorrect truths. We can see how dangerous it is when fake news stories are spread around. There is an 'anti-science' sentiment which is often shared on social media which breeds climate change denialism as well as making people reticent to get vaccinated.

Mark 8: 27-38

Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea

Philippi. On the way he asked them, "Who do people say I am?" Mark 8:27

In this passage Jesus seeks understanding from his disciples as to how people perceive and understand him. Some see him as John the Baptist returned, others as the messianic herald/forerunner Elijah, and yet others as one of the prophets. Peter, speaking for the disciples and responding to Jesus direct question says he is the Christ. As with others who have acknowledged him in some way, Jesus forbids his disciples to tell anyone. Commentaries explain this on the basis of them being on gentile territory in this case Caesarea Philippi.

Peter's understanding of who Jesus is (the Confession of Peter), is found wanting when Jesus explains what is to happen to him in Jerusalem. In Matthew's gospel (Matt 16:13-28) the story includes Jesus' proclamation of Peter as the foundation of the church and bearer of the keys of heaven (Matt 16: 17-19). Both accounts clearly draw on the same source and Jesus' dramatic rejection of Peter becomes an opportunity for Jesus to teach on the meaning and cost of being a follower.

Thomas A'Kempis wrote in the 15th Century "The hardest struggle is the struggle to overcome ourselves". Our gospel reading tells us how crucial it is not to misinterpret who Jesus is. His rebuke of Peter is that Peter has in mind the things of man rather than that which is of God. How grateful we are to Peter for the repeated failures that are reported of him! It is hard to imagine another leader with so many documented disappointments. Yet the good news is precisely the restored and

Our tongues can do great good, but also great harm if we pass on fake news and incorrect truths.

"The hardest struggle is the struggle to overcome ourselves".

Thomas A'Kempis

It is one thing to shout, "Jesus is our Lord"; it is another to live a Christian faith of love.

All of creation bears the imprint of God's fingers. We have a unique role as earth keepers and protectors of creation. We too, bear sacramental testimony to the working of God's hand.

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transformed Peter that we are later to see courageously proclaiming the gospel in the heartland of religious cultural opposition. So too, we can overcome the worldviews that we have succumbed to and regain a paradigm which glistens with the joy and wonder of living with creation rather than in opposition to it.

It is one thing to shout, "Jesus is our Lord"; it is another to live a Christian faith of love. The outrageous love that Jesus calls us to embody is risky, courageous, and life changing. Peter was complacent about the path of discipleship. He could only focus on the eventual glory. The teaching of Jesus along the way about where this would lead was just too difficult to accept. Jesus developed His wisdom through listening to the poor and downtrodden, fisher folk and vineyard labourers and knew He needed to engage with them and champion their human rights. In Mark 8:36-37 Jesus asks what good it is to gain the whole world but forfeit our souls. What a challenge to the materialism that hardens our heart against God and our fellow creatures!

How do we discard that tight-fitting cultural mantle, consumerism, whose fashions we so readily wear, and whose synthetic products continue to pollute our oceans and atmosphere? How do we overcome the narratives and myths that capture and hold us on a desperately dangerous extractive and industrial trajectory? That is the challenge that faces humankind. A tipping point has been reached in that we have arrived at an existential point where our exploitative nature is confronted by a planet which says, "no more". Many would interpret the Covid 19 virus as a

dramatic demonstration of this. 'Building back' after the pandemic must contain a new respect for the natural environment. Our plans will need to be as Thomas Berry noted, mutually beneficial to ourselves and nature.

We need to gaze at the universe, to touch the earth and breathe its atmosphere with reverence and awe. In this regard the church has two fundamental roles. Firstly, its programmes need to purposefully assist people to engage with the natural world. There needs to be a deep commitment to the integrity of creation and to discover in practical ways, through observation and touch, the household of creation; literally to speak like Francis of Assisi of Brother Sun and Sister Moon. We will only protect what we have grown to love.

Secondly, we need to rediscover a theology of creation which dissolves any notions of human superiority. What does it mean to be made in the image of God? It means that we can declare the glory of God in creation. We are not superior or separate from the rest of creation. All of creation bears the imprint of God's fingers. We have a unique role as earth keepers and protectors of creation. We too, bear sacramental testimony to the working of God's hand.

What does it mean for us to take up our cross and follow Christ, the Lord of all creation in our current era of ecological devastation?

FACT SHEET

One million species are threatened by extinction. The Earth has experienced five mass extinctions in its history, but the crucial difference is that this time the threat is being caused by humans.

Our actions over the past 50 years have been the cause of record losses in species – tens to hundreds of times faster than the natural rate of extinction. In the last 50 years, populations have fallen by 40 per cent for land-based species, 84 per cent for freshwater species and 35 per cent for marine species. This is caused by human activities: accelerating land-use change such as through farming and logging, overusing our seas and oceans such as through fishing, polluting our air, soil and water systems, hunting and invasive species. Human activities have significantly altered around three-quarters of all land and two-thirds of all oceans on the planet.

“We destroy the planet at our peril – as humanity’s footprint expands into once wild places, we are devastating species populations and increasing the risk of zoonotic diseases (that cross from animals to humans) like COVID19. It is time to restore our broken relationship with nature for the benefit of species and people alike”. Carter Roberts, WWF President

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WWF Living Planet Report 2020, <https://www.zsl.org/sites/default/files/LPR%202020%20Full%20report.pdf>

LITURGICAL MATERIAL FOR WEEK TWO

GATHERING IN GOD'S NAME

May none of your wonderful creations
cease in their praise of you,
God of beauty and wonder –
neither at night nor in the morning.
May the glimmering stars,
the breath-taking mountains,
the fathomless depths of the sea,
the crashing waves,
the singing streams
all burst out in songs of praise to you,
the Creator of all:
Father, Son and Holy Spirit!

We join the angels before the throne
in singing "Amen! Amen! Amen!"
Power and majesty, praise and honour
are due to you,
Granter of infinite mercy.
Amen! Amen! Amen!

(A third-century prayer of praise from Egypt)

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Creating God, you give light and life,
and express delight in your creation.
You gave the command to till and care for your
garden, but we have abused the beauty of
creation and keeping of your work.

We confess the plundering of finite resources.
We confess to stealing our descendants'
birthright to life.
We confess the flagrant pollution of land,
sea and air.
We confess the churches' lack of concern
for the well-being of creation.
We confess the excesses within our own lifestyle.
Creating God, we have desecrated
your creation and darkened your light.
In a moment of quiet we confess our profligate
lifestyle and human greed.

WORDS OF RENEWAL

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

Amen.

(CTBI Eco-Congregations)

RESPONDING TO THE WORD OF GOD

Affirmation of faith

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.

(All desires known, Janet Morley)

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Reader 1

Creator God, the freedom and responsibilities we were gifted by you have been abused. We have used domination rather than being stewards of your sacred Creation. Walls are created to keep others out instead of inns where all are welcome. Help us to trust in our identity as your children. Accept our thanks for all people who show in action that indeed your Creation is sacred.

Reader 2

Creator God, hear us as we cry out to you for peace and justice for the peoples and the land itself. Guide us to a place where sacred water, land and resources are respected and shared by all. As your Word became part of your living creation, teach us to trust in hope that one day soon all may dwell in peace and happiness. May your justice truly course through our lands like an unstoppable flood.

Reader 1

Creator, we give thanks for Mother Earth and all her abundant life. She protects us and nourishes us. Help us to conserve nature and serve all Creation. Continue to reveal yourself through your sacred creation. Help us to shape ourselves within the warmth of each day and every time we allow new wisdom to guide us and help us grow

Reader 2

God our Creator, not long ago, we took for granted that food was produced and shared in local community. Today we live within the consequences of the choices we have made and now the nourishment of Mother Earth is not available to all.

Reader 1

Great Creator, heal and redeem the wounds of your Creation. We know the food which grows from your Creation is meant for all. Help us find ways to bring nourishment to the people and places that seek it. Teach us and show us the way.

Reader 2

Creator God of earth, sea, and sky, ignite the sacred fire of your Spirit within us that we may rise up to heal and defend Mother Earth, and pour your blessing upon all who work for the caring of all your Creation.

Reader 1

Creator, you made the world and declared it to be good:

The beauty of the trees, the softness of the air,
The fragrance of the grass speaks to us.

The summit of the mountains, the thunder of the sky,

The rhythm of the lakes speaks to us.

The faintness of the stars, the freshness of the morning,

The dewdrops on the flower speak to us.

But above all, our heart soars for you speak to us
in your Son, Jesus Christ,

In whose name we offer these prayers.

Amen

(Kelly Sherman Conroy, Evangelical Lutheran Church)

CELEBRATING AT THE TABLE

Holy indeed are you, O God, and holy is your eternal Word, your living Wisdom,

the firstborn of all creation, who, for us and for our salvation, took flesh in the womb of Mary, was born and lived among us.

And, being found in human form, he humbled himself, even to death on a cross,

to deliver us from sin and death and to exalt us to everlasting life.

SENDING OUT

All this day O Lord, let me touch as many lives as possible for you.

And every life I touch, may you by your spirit quicken, whether through the word I speak, the prayer I breathe or the life I live. **Amen**

(The Mothers Union Prayer)

BENEDICTION

Walk with love and care on God's earth.

walk with vital awareness

of God's comprehensive vision
and purpose for creation.

Walk with awe and gratitude

to ensure justice to the trees and rivers

as well as the person next to you –

they are not without purpose in God's vision.

Amen

(Ven Taimalelagi Fagamalama Tuatagaloa, Samoa USPG "For such a time as this")



MUSIC

A beautiful version of “The Lord is my shepherd”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cn2zKKhhF3I>

A playlist of creation themed hymns with words and images

<https://www.youtube.com/h?v=HAvbwbe0g6Y&list=PLkTM3lalbXdDUVoDG9KTZNTVLJYACKCMf>

A selection of hymns from Green Christian

<https://greenchristian.org.uk/hymns/watch?v=HAvbwbe0g6Y&list=PLkTM3lalbXdDUVoDG9KTZNTVLJYACKCMf>

A selection of hymns from Green Christian

<https://greenchristian.org.uk/hymns/>



WEEK 3

Ecumenism: The family of God in our Common Home

SEASON OF CREATION

26

INTRODUCTION

“OIKUMENE – THE WHOLE INHABITED WORLD”

We have looked at ‘economy’ and ‘ecology’. A third word that comes from the root of oikos is “ecumenical”, which comes from oikoumene – the whole inhabited world. This is a grounding point for the ecumenical movement of Christian unity. “Ecumenical” contains the idea of both economy and ecology. God has created this, our common home and is seeking justice, equity, reconciliation and the flourishing of the whole of creation. The idea of the oikoumene, the house in which God is at work – the whole of the inhabited universe, provides a theological alternative to the concept of globalisation.

There are many negatives to globalisation, particularly the destruction of biodiversity and climate change. Many multi-national corporations abuse workers and the planet, exploiting the lowest labour costs and the weakest environmental standards they can find globally to make their products. In contrast to globalisation, this vision of “oikumene” is described as the place of God’s reconciling mission:

And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations. Matt 24:14

In Acts we read of Agabus who told of the great famine that would come over the whole world ‘oikoumene’, and the response of the people which was to give to those in need.

One of them named Agabus stood up and began to indicate by the Spirit that there would certainly be a great famine all over the world.... So the disciples collected money for the people in Judea. Acts 11: 28

The picture of the oikoumene helps us see the positive side of our global networks. It

recognises the unity of all humans whatever their culture or social class. They are not just faceless labourers or consumers serving the multi-nationals. The eleven-year-old boy digging coltan in DRC to go into my cell phone has a face and name because of social media. We must challenge the nightmare of rampant globalisation with the vision of the shared oikoumene – a home for all.

One of the key ways of combatting the negative effects of globalisation is to work ecumenically – recognising that we are all part of the ‘Oikos tou Theou’ – the household of God, the church (Eph 2:19) – the community of faith. It is wonderful to see how a concern for our common home is uniting Christians globally. The Season of Creation which started in the Orthodox Church, has spread to the World Council of Churches, Anglican Communion Environmental Network, Global Catholic Climate Movement, Lutheran World Federation and now other churches and movements.

“The calling of the church is to hold up the radical inclusivity of the household of God, in which all are invited to sit at the family table as equals.” (The Oikos Journey)

The church must be a constant witness against the economies of exclusion, which takes God given resources of the Earth and the labour of the poor and delivers them into the hands of wealthy shareholders.

The Rev. Dr Martin Luther King, Jr. and others have called the oikos of God “the Beloved Community”, a community in which all of life are equally members, equally precious to God.

COLLECT

God of the living earth

You called us to be part of your beloved community,
baptised into one family through the sacred waters of
life called to care together for your world.

Guide as we work to sustain our common home.

Help us to find the path to living in peace and harmony
with all your creatures

united by the divine dance of the Trinity.

Amen

SERMON NOTES

Rev Shaun Cozett, Diocese of Cape Town

In Genesis God set a dome over the Earth. The word “dome” is where we get words such as ‘domicile’ and ‘domestic’ — in other words, God puts us all — all people, all life — under the same domed roof — we are all in the house, the oikos of God. God gave humans the ministry to take care and cultivate this oikos of God.

(Season of Creation Ecumenical Guide 2021)

Proverbs 31: 10-31

Probably one of the most famous passages in the Book of Proverbs, chapter 31 tells of the industrious wife. It explains how she is able to perform many tasks both inside and outside the home; how she is able to raise money and buy a house, raise a family and bring pride to her husband. But is this meant to be a job description for a good wife? McCreesh (1985) argues that this passage is not meant to be taken literally, because if it is, it would suggest that women are meant to do everything in the home while their husbands sit in the places of honour and boast. This passage is rather about wisdom and comes as the final chapter of the book to summarize what had already

been said. Wisdom is often spoken of in feminine terms, so to speak of wisdom as a woman or a wife (depending on your translation) is nothing strange. Here the wife (wisdom) is portrayed as desirable, because she is able to generate wealth, build a family, inculcate good values and bring honour. This passage shows us that wisdom, as an attribute, is highly regarded in the Bible and something we should strive towards. It is Wisdom that models the way to look after our home. Note how she ensures everyone, and everything can flourish: her family, the poor, the land and the economy!

This passage teaches us that we must be guided by wisdom to protect our common home. Where do we find such wisdom? The Spirit of God will guide us, but we must also listen to scientists who are also guided by wisdom. It is interesting to note that the Anglican Communion has just set up a Science and Faith commission chaired by Archbishop Thabo, recognising the importance of faith and science working hand in hand. Globally too we are realising that we must be guided by the ancient wisdoms of our ancestors and the

LITURGY

First Reading

Proverbs 31:10-31

Psalm 1

Second Reading

James 3:13 – 4:3, 7-8a

Gospel

Mark 9:30-37

It is Wisdom that models the way to look after our home. Note how she ensures everyone, and everything can flourish: her family, the poor, the land and the economy!

Where do we find such wisdom? The Spirit of God will guide us, but we must also listen to scientists who are also guided by wisdom.

voices of indigenous people. Belief systems that came with colonialism have devastated the globe, it is time to learn from ancient wisdoms that treasured Mother Earth and teach us that we are part of the web of life and not separate to it.

Psalm 1

Psalm 1 suggests that there are two paths that can be followed, the path of righteousness or the path of sin. The Psalmist suggests that those who follow the path of righteousness will find favour with God and will enjoy the blessings of God. The way of the sinners will lead to destruction and ultimately such a person will not be able to defend themselves on the day of judgement. Psalm 1 is considered a Psalm of Wisdom, as the focus of the psalm is not on expressing the prophetic word of God, nor does it exalt God, but rather it offers insight and guidance to the person who seeks to live a life that is pleasing to God. The emphasis here is on instructing the individual believer in how to live their life. This characteristic is common in Wisdom literature, that it seeks to impact the decisions of the individual and calls on the individual to make wise choices, promising that it would lead to God's blessings. When we live in harmony with nature, there will be shalom, right relationships and we will give fruit in its season.

This Psalm encourages us to seek to spend time with other people of faith, rather than 'sitting in the seats of scoffers', it is as we work together ecumenically that the movement to care for creation will grow.

James 3:13-4:3, 7-8a

James, in today's lesson, writes

that there are two kinds of wisdom; that which is from the earth and that which is from above. James goes on to call the reader to be reconciled to God. He writes that where jealousy, envy, hatred and anger are present, such 'wisdom' will be disorderly and the wisdom that leads to these attitudes and the resulting actions will lead to disorder and conflict. This is the kind of wisdom which does not come from heaven but is earthly wisdom. The wisdom that comes from heaven is characterised by love and loving action. James goes on to encourage the reader to be reconciled to God and live according to God's laws. This passage is another example of Wisdom literature, since the aim of the passage is to encourage the righteousness and right living of the individual. The passage, like Psalm 1, does not offer prophetic words or understanding of who God is, but rather is aimed at the individual making decisions. James makes clear that there is wisdom in the world, but the reader should be clear about the origin of that wisdom and where that wisdom would lead.

"But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness." James 3:17-18

James challenges us not to show envy and selfish ambition. Sadly, in the environmental movements, sometimes jealousies and cracks do appear, and people want their name to be noted, their organisation to get the credit. Perhaps we should turn to the wisdom of the mighty rivers such as the Amazon. The

*When we live in
harmony with nature,
there will be shalom,
right relationships
and we will give fruit
in its season.*

*it is only as those
rivers lose their
names and converge
into the mighty
Amazon that they
gain power to wash
away rocks and wear
down mountains,*

*Peacemakers
who sow in peace
reap a harvest of
righteousness."
James 3:17-18*

Amazon is fed by many tiny drops. Every drop is important, for they trickle into streams which become rivers. And all those rivers have names. But it is only as those rivers lose their names and converge into the mighty Amazon that they gain power to wash away rocks and wear down mountains. To have power in our movements, we may need to lose our name...

Mark 9: 30-37

Jesus speaks about his death for the second time, and this leads to the disciples discussing amongst themselves who the next leader would be. Jesus famously tells them that anyone wishing to be the leader should first be the servant of all. This conversation is of course held in the context of an honour and shame culture, in which the desirable position to be in is the one that allows the community to see you as a person of honour. The leader of the disciples would no doubt have been a powerful position, given the following that Jesus had and that the new leader could potentially build on. Jesus reminds his disciples that in the kingdom of God servanthood is more desirable than power or status and that they should focus on humility and love above power and prestige. This again is a challenge to our ecumenical work – are we looking for status or for service?

In verses 36-37, Jesus tells us that in welcoming children we welcome God himself. Today, many children and young people suffer from climate anxiety and despair about the future. Wisdom for us, must include listening to the voices of young people and seeing climate change as an intergenerational justice issue.

Today's lessons are all examples of Wisdom Literature. Typically, Wisdom literature seeks to convey a message based on life experience. If you follow the message, you will find life and blessing, and if not, destruction will follow. Wisdom literature is common in the Old Testament and found in Job, Psalms, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes are all considered books of wisdom. But are these books meant for those who have sinned and need to return to God?

In traditional theology, humans sin and then God offers salvation, but Wisdom theology on Godly living shows a different path. God offers us salvation from the start, teaching us from the beginning and guiding our thoughts and actions. Wisdom literature calls for salvation and right living and seeks not to shame those who have acted unwisely but rather offers the good news of salvation in the knowledge that no-one can act wisely at all times.

The call to salvation is therefore a call made not in response to sin and the need to plead forgiveness but is the promise that righteousness would lead to blessing, in the hope that this would encourage us to choose wisely and follow God's laws. "God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us".

The issues of sin, ethics and morality are often associated with environmental damage (Messer, 2014). The concept of anthropogenic climate change by definition indicates that the changing climate and loss of species is the direct result of human actions. How are we supposed to respond? Looking today at the Wisdom Literature we see that our efforts should be

“Wisdom for us, must include listening to the voices of young people and seeing climate change as an intergenerational justice issue.”

The issues of sin, ethics and morality are often associated with environmental damage

(Messer, 2014)

The great threats of our time; climate change, species loss and inequality point to lack of care for creation and each other, a lack that has seen humanity focus on individual wellbeing and financial success.

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invested in unpacking the benefits of doing the right things as well as stating what might happen if we did the wrong things. Wisdom in the Bible is distinguished from knowledge, which is the result of personal efforts and life experiences. Wisdom is given by God and is meant for the building up of the community. The way we frame a sermon on salvation during the Season of Creation should not merely seek to indicate how people have acted incorrectly and need to amend their actions, it should be the Good News that God offers us His wisdom and the rewards of wise living, even while we are still acting unwisely.

The sermon therefore should focus on hope and the promises of God for those who will honour God through righteousness. We are also reminded that sin speaks of the separation in the relationship between God and human beings, which only God could heal through His redemptive love on the cross. Preaching about the damage done to God's creation is therefore a critical part of reflecting on the severing of that relationship, knowing that in creation God said that all that is created is good.

The call to salvation is therefore a call back to God's goodness, but not of our own doing, it is a call back to God through God's efforts and God's sacrifice. For the Christian therefore, caring for creation is a response to salvation and not a means of salvation.

The great threats of our time; climate change, species loss and inequality point to lack of care for creation and each other, a lack that has seen humanity focus on individual wellbeing and financial success. Following today's service, it is

intended that congregants would have a renewed understanding of God's generosity and the love that made restoring our connection with God possible. There are many factors that have led to the current lamentable state of creation, some of which are outside the control of the individual, but where we are able to take personal action, the right thing to do is to act in love for others and for creation. These actions, we are promised, will lead to blessings and a restoration of life as opposed to wrongful actions that will lead to destruction. The call to salvation today is a call to recognise that God offers both an opportunity for our relationship with God, which has been broken by sin, to be restored, and also the reminder that this offer of salvation has always been there. We act in love as a response to God's offer of salvation, and not because we ourselves are righteous or justified through our actions.

LITURGICAL MATERIAL FOR WEEK THREE

GATHERING IN GOD'S NAME

Call to worship

Creator, you bent the earth like a bow until it was one, round, shining planet. At your word the land was drawn into mountains and deserts, forests and plains; the waters were gathered together into rivers, lakes and seas. Many times, when people crossed these seas from other lands, they broke the circle of your creation by their greed and violence, and they shattered the lives of others.

Creator, renew the circle of the earth and turn the hearts of all people to one another; that they and all the earth may live and be drawn toward you through the power of your Son, who lives with you and the Holy Spirit in the circle of the Trinity, forever One.

(Kelly Sherman Conroy, Evangelical Lutheran Church)

ACT OF PENITENCE

Lord Jesus Christ, the firstborn of creation, in whom all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible,
Lord, have mercy

Lord, have mercy

You who are before all things and in whom all things hold together, the head of the church,
Christ, have mercy

Christ, have mercy

In you all the fullness of God dwells and through you God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things in heaven and on earth,

Lord, have mercy

Lord, have mercy

Col. 1:15-20

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

God who in His wisdom sent us Jesus Christ as an offering for our sins, once and for all, forgive us our sins and restore through the cross of Christ our relationship with himself, with each other and with all of creation.

Amen

RESPONDING TO THE WORD OF GOD

Affirmation of faith

We have faith in One God, one Source of all life.
One Ground of the whole earth,
with all her creatures.

We have faith in the fullness of earth's life,
in the innate worth of all her dependents,
in human partnership in the life of nature.

We have faith that in Christ we have been shown the special role of the human race to bear God's likeness in working and caring for the earth,
in seeking to understand her mysteries and powers, in gently working with these powers for the well-being of all children of the earth.

We have faith
that God's Spirit will lead us to
sensitive closeness with earth's life.

(ECEN)

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Let us pray:

Creator God, we thank you for your word, the word that was with you at the creation of the world, the word that went forth from you and created light and separated it from the darkness, creating land and separating it from the waters, giving life every creature and calling us to be the carers of all you created. We thank you for Jesus, the promised Messiah, who came to earth as the word made flesh and taught us how to live.

We acknowledge before you that we haven't always lived up to our calling to be stewards of your gifts. Forgive us for our lack of care that has caused pollution of the land, sea and air. Forgive us for our greed that has caused the over-use of water, the extinction of insects, birds, fish and animals, the burning of forests and the exploitation of people. Forgive our love for war and violence through which we have disrupted countries, displaced people, poached animals and caused devastation for the earth.

We bring before you all who suffer; the sick, the homeless, the unemployed and the lonely. We pray for comfort for the bereaved and rest for those who have gone before us.

We thank you for teachers of the faith who remind us of your grace and your love for us. For teachers in places of learning who help us understand your wisdom in creation and open for us new ways of knowing you and praising you. We thank you for homes and institutions that teach values of love, fairness and godly living and for all who pass on the story of your salvation from one generation to another.

We ask your blessings on the leaders of our country, the ministers of your word and sacrament and the faithful here gathered. May we be channels of your grace and companions in your transformation in the world. We ask these things through Christ who loves us and the Holy Spirit who empowers us. **Amen**

(Scottish Eco congregations)

CELEBRATING AT THE TABLE

Sharing of the Peace

As a community let us embrace the ongoing work of being stewards of all your creation. We see God around us. Let us claim it. We see God within us. Let us share it. If we are in Christ, we are becoming a new creation. One Body. Let us show the caring nature you have instilled within us by greeting each other as a sign of God's justice of peace, love, forgiveness and grace. The peace of our Creator be with you in all things.

(Kelly Sherman Conroy, Evangelical Lutheran Church)

Invitation to Communion

Draw near and receive the body broken and blood poured out. Christ was sacrificed for the world and by his wounds we are healed.

The Lord's prayer

Eternal Spirit, Earth-maker, Pain-bearer, Life-giver,
Source of all that is and that shall be,
Father and Mother of us all,
Loving God, in whom is heaven:

The hallowing of your name
echo through the universe!
The way of your justice be followed
by the peoples of the world!

Your heavenly will be done by all created beings!
Your beloved community of peace and
freedom sustain our hope and come on earth.

With the bread we need for today, feed us.
In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us.
In times of temptation and test, strengthen us.
From trials too great to endure, spare us.
From the grip of all that is evil, free us.
For you reign in the glory of the power that is love,
now and for ever.

Amen.

(New Zealand Prayer Book, adapted)

SENDING OUT

Post communion Prayer

God has restored us by the cross of Christ and renewed us with His word and sacrament. Let us go forth into the world to renew and restore all that is broken, lost and hurting. **Amen**

BENEDICTION

Renewing Spirit, Creator God, look upon these faces gathered in Holy community together and send them anywhere you would have them go, so that they may embody the ministry of justice for your Creation through their actions.

Walk with them so that they may face the winds of change and walk the good road. Enlighten them. Sustain them. May God our Creator be with you this day and always.

(Kelly Sherman Conroy, Evangelical Lutheran Church)

MUSIC

From Hymns Ancient and Modern New Standard

207 – Praise to the Lord the almighty the king of creation

15 – Dear Lord and Father of mankind

249 – Take my life and let it be

394 – Lord of all hopefulness



WEEK 4

Pray and act for our Common Home

SEASON OF CREATION

34

INTRODUCTION

PRAY AND ACT FOR OUR COMMON HOME

The web of life is unravelling. There is a danger that responses to climate injustice and environmental chaos can become only about activism: campaigns and advocacy. Today's readings encourage us to turn to God in prayer in times of crisis, recognising that activism needs deep foundations in a spirituality that sustains and renews us. The challenges ahead are huge and without a spirituality that sustains us, we may burn out.

"We face multiple crises of poverty, inequality, biodiversity loss and the climate crisis. We have a short window – a kairos moment - in which to turn from well worn, broken paths and choose a better story for ourselves and for the world. But what story will we tell? Some say that Africa is failing, doomed to chaos and

poverty and reliance. Others say that Africa is rising, but as a slave to a narrative of greed, power, violence, individualism and extraction, to the benefit of just a few. We see another way - a courageous choice to turn from these two single stories and tell a new story, one created by the agency and voices of all African citizens: an Abundant Africa. An Abundant African economy could be built upon shalom, upon African values of innovation, freedom and relationship. It could reduce poverty and inequality, honour human dignity, care for creation - and in so doing be an economy that will lead the world." (Abundant Africa).

This is a vision towards which we must pray and act.

For more information explore

Pray and act for climate justice - <https://www.prayandact4climate.org/>

Abundant Africa - <https://abundant.africa/>

COLLECT

God, creator of the universe:

**Fill us with your love for the whole of creation,
Awake in us the passion to work for your world
with passion and boldness**

**Lift us up on eagles' wings, so that we may not be
overwhelmed by the task ahead.**

**In the power of the Holy Spirit who renews the face of
the Earth.**

Amen.

SERMON NOTES

Rev Mkhusele Lujabe, Diocese of Cape Town

Esther 7:1-6,9-10; 9: 20-22

In today's portion of the Esther story, we read how Queen Esther being of Jewish blood herself, becomes an instrument of the deliverance of the Jewish people against whom a plot to kill had been set by Haman. Justice is served when Haman becomes a victim of his own plot of manipulation and cruelty towards the Jews of the time. The conclusion of this set text for today, depicts the vindication of Mordecai as well, who is given a place of honour following the King's promotion. To this day, this event continues to be crucial and central to the Jewish people as evident in the annual Jewish Purim festival which commemorates this event. The reading reflects the question: how can one be a faithful Jew in a foreign environment? One answer could be to cut themselves off from the pollution of another culture and faith. But Esther argues that Jewish people should become active participants in society.

This challenges us as disciples of Christ – in our environmental activism, we need to work with those of other faiths and none. Change can only be achieved if

we are willing to challenge the principalities and powers and speak truth to power as Esther did.

The book of Esther is a story of a woman whom God used to bring justice and deliverance at the heart of the political process, at great personal risk. Can we intercede for those today who are strategically placed to speak truth to power, to challenge self-interest, and to advocate for climate victims and nature herself?

We also need to recognise that we are often not the 'Esthers' of this story, we are often the Hamans or the King - for we are the ones whose lifestyle choices are causing the abuse of other people and eco-systems. This should cause us to lament and change our ways.

Psalm 124

This psalm forms part of the collection of Psalms known as the songs of Ascents, sung by pilgrims as they made their way to the place of worship in Jerusalem.

The psalmist acknowledges the hand of God in the deliverance of Israel – God's own chosen race,

LITURGY

First Reading

Esther 7:1-6,9-10; 9:20-22

Psalm 124

Second Reading

James 5:13-20

Gospel

Mark 9: 38-50

Change can only be achieved if we are willing to challenge the principalities and powers and speak truth to power as Esther did.

God's beloved – from great danger. Once again, the theme of God as a shield of life, the one who goes through great lengths to save humanity and the preciousness of life; becomes audible as a hymn of great gratitude from the pen of the psalmist.

The language of the psalm is filled with graphic descriptions, with words that display the extent to which human life was threatened in danger – the images of being 'swallowed up alive, flood sweeping, the torrents and raging waters covering people'. Many of the descriptions picture nature raging, in storms and torrents. In these verses the reader is given a clear understanding of God's love for people, as a crucial aspect of creation and a true expression of the relationship of grace between God and humanity.

The poetic language of nature and destruction speaks to us today, concerned about the impact of climate change, with storms, hurricanes, floods and sea level rise impacting on the poorest of the poor. We look to God to save us, but we are also called to be disciples of God and work to help to heal the Earth and avoid future catastrophic climate change.

Our hope is in the maker of heaven and earth!

James 5: 13-20

The reader of the letter of James is known for his focus on action "faith without works is dead" James 2:17, shows us that once the gospel has been received, it is to be lived out in the Christian life.

To say, 'Is anyone among you in trouble, let them pray', 'Is anyone

among you sick, call the elders to pray' 'if the rain does not fall, pray for rain' – at first sounds like an over spiritualisation of the issues. Are we then 'sending thoughts and prayers' and doing nothing?

But if we understand this passage within the theology of James, we see that action is taken for granted – prayer, then is the underpinning of the clear call to action. Action undergirded by prayer is a powerful formula for change. Prayer not only connects us with God, it connects us with the community of God as we 'call together the elders'.

We see different types of prayer modelled in this passage. We see prayers of lament for those in trouble, and also prayers of thanksgiving. We see prayers for people who are sick and also prayers for the climate. We can see how our health is dependent on the health of the Earth. We depend upon the web of life for our well-being. We need to confess our sins and commit to new ways of living in harmony with the community and with the whole of creation.

Through prayer we can connect with other believers and turn to God for strength and be restored. The theme of salvation, forgiveness and restoration are God's ways of bringing those whom he loves back to life in its fullness (body, mind and spirit); becomes the backdrop of understanding the James text.

The healing of our bodies and souls is set in the broader context of creation. The reference to the story of Elijah's faith in 1 Kings 17 & 18 seeks to open up for the reader that the prayer of the one who has faith prevails, even when praying for relief from a drought, the healing of the Earth. Human

We look to God to save us, but we are also called to be disciples of God and work to help to heal the Earth and avoid future catastrophic climate change.

Action undergirded by prayer is a powerful formula for change.

health and wellbeing is dependent on the health of the eco-systems that sustain us. We need to confess to the damage we have done to God's Earth and commit to new ways of living in harmony with the community and with the whole of creation.

The writer places confession and forgiveness of sins through prayer at the centre as a way of restoring harmony between God and humanity. Prayers of lament are also an important part of discipleship and stewardship of Creation in order to bring about healing and restoration.

James highlights the importance of prayer in the life of a disciple. If you consider yourself an activist – are you praying about the Climate crisis? Are you praying for God's mercy for people and places suffering devastating and catastrophic drought or flood, storms or erosion? We must also pray for the political processes, for COP26 in Glasgow in November 2021, and for God's Spirit to change the hearts of world leaders, to give them compassion and embolden them to take unpopular but necessary decisions.

"The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective" (5:16b). Faith can move mountains.

Mark 9: 38-50

In the gospel passage there are two sections which make up the lesson for today's reflection: verse 38-41, and verses 42-50.

Setting this passage in context we notice in Mark 9: 33-37 that Jesus teaches about the dangers of being swayed from the heart of service and ministry by indulgence in privilege,

status and power amongst those who are his disciples. He points them to a ministry of humility, service and tolerance.

"Whoever is not against us is for us" v 40

In verse 38-41 we see that the disciples are critical of people casting out demons in Jesus' name – because they are not professed disciples like the twelve. (Cole, 1983: 151). Jesus judges them for their attitude towards those who are doing good deeds. These deeds might be spiritual or basic physical needs like a glass of clean drinking water. In this passage Jesus forbids partisanship between the disciples and the world. There will be those working in the same area of caring for creation, providing water and relief needs, who hold different beliefs than ours. We need to be willing to work in partnership with them for justice for the poor and for creation.

"If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them if a large millstone were hung around their neck, and they were thrown into the sea". v 42

Mark uses strong language to warn of the danger of causing children and young people to stumble. Climate injustice is at heart intergenerational justice. We are abusing the resources of the generations to come. A recent UK survey claimed 90% of young Christians see the climate as today's most pressing and urgent issue, and yet 90% also say their churches are not doing enough on climate change. If churches are slow to pray, speak and act on the climate emergency, this passage suggests God will judge us harshly

"The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective"

James 5:16b.

Climate injustice is at heart intergenerational justice. We are abusing the resources of the generations to come.



Restoration and reconciliation between God, humanity and creation can be hindered by our personal attitudes.

Can Christians become the salt that is rubbed in, to preserve and protect it? A tiny amount of salt can preserve a large piece of meat. Or have we lost our saltiness – are our lifestyles and value systems exactly the same as others?

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for causing young people to stumble in their faith. Our response needs to be in lament and repentance, in prayer and fasting, and in speaking out and acting decisively.

“If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off” v 43

In verse 41-50 the teaching of Jesus turns towards personal attitudes of the disciples, as he expands on his teaching about humility and charity of heart and action towards others. Once again Jesus shows great concern for righteousness of relationships between God and the people, and how by all means the task of discipleship ought to be a clear channel for making possible for people to be united with God through Christ.

Restoration and reconciliation between God, humanity and creation can be hindered by our personal attitudes. This graphic depiction of the removal of a destructive body part shows that there are very large sacrifices that need to be taken. The road ahead is not easy.

“Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again”? v 50

Salt was used before there was refrigeration as a way of preserving meat and to stop it from going rotten. We can see that our planet is being devastated, and polluted, becoming in the words of Pope Francis- a pile of filth – Can Christians become the salt that is rubbed in, to preserve and protect it? A tiny amount of salt can preserve a large piece of meat. Or have we lost our saltiness – are our lifestyles and value systems exactly the same as others?

As disciples of Christ we are called

to a life of simplicity and sacrifice. We are the restoration generation!

FACT SHEET

Rising temperatures

Predictions show continued warming and decreasing rainfall especially over North and Southern Africa. Extensive areas of Africa will exceed 2 °C of warming by 2080 with an increase in heatwaves and hot days.

Extreme events

Cyclone Idai was among the most destructive tropical cyclones ever recorded in the southern hemisphere. The intensity of hurricanes is increasing. Southern Africa suffered extensive drought in 2019.

Food security impacts

In the drought-prone sub-Saharan African countries, the number of undernourished people has increased by 45.6% since 2012 (FAO). Agriculture is the backbone of Africa's economy and accounts for the majority of livelihoods across the continent. Rain-fed agriculture is particularly at risk to climate variability. The key risks to crop productivity are heat and drought stress and increased pest damage, disease damage and flood impacts on food system infrastructure, resulting in serious effects on food security.

Health impacts

Warmer temperatures and higher rainfall increase habitat suitability for biting insects and the transmission of vector-borne diseases such as dengue fever, malaria and yellow fever. In addition, new diseases are emerging in regions where they were previously not present. In 2017, an estimated 93% of global malaria deaths occurred in Africa. Malaria epidemics often occur after periods of unusually heavy rainfall. In addition, warming in the highlands of East Africa is allowing malaria-carrying mosquitoes to survive at higher altitudes.

Economic impacts

For scenarios ranging from a 1 °C to a 4 °C increase in global temperatures relative to pre-industrial levels, the continent's overall GDP is expected to decrease by 2.3% to 12.1%.

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<https://unfccc.int/news/climate-change-is-an-increasing-threat-to-africa>

LITURGICAL MATERIAL FOR WEEK FOUR

GATHERING IN GOD'S NAME

Call to worship

Creator God
We come before You today
With open minds and loving hearts.
We thank You for the gift of Your creation
And all You have given us
We are called to be your disciples,
Teach us how to build a world of love,
justice and peace
And to be better stewards of Your creation.

PENITENCE

Loving God,
You have invited us into
relationship with You, and others.
For the times when we have turned away and
broken the bonds between us.
Lord have mercy

Lord have mercy

You have given us many gifts to
share with one another.
For the times when we have used
them without regard for others.
Christ have mercy

Christ have mercy

You invited us to be to be Your
disciples in the world.
For the times when we have rejected Your
invitation and taken our own path.
Lord have mercy

Lord have mercy

RESPONDING TO THE WORD OF GOD

Prayers of the People

We give thanks today for the many
gifts God has given us:
for the beauty of the earth and the
abundance of its creatures,
for food to nourish us and water
to quench our thirst,
for the seasons that nurture us

and the relationships that sustain us.
May we be good stewards of creation,
using our skills and talents for the benefit of all.
Lord in Your mercy

Hear our prayer

We remember today all those whose lives are
already affected by climate change,
especially the poorest and most vulnerable
throughout the world.
We pray that God be with them and suffuse them
with the gift of hope
and strength to fight for a better world.
Lord in Your mercy

Hear our prayer

We pray for our churches, around the world,
that as communities of faith we may be active
participants in work for climate justice.
We pray for those in positions of leadership,
that they may use their voices to speak out on
behalf of those most vulnerable to climate change,
and the whole of God's creation.
Lord in Your mercy

Hear our prayer

We pray for ourselves, that we may recognise the
invitation to discipleship as a gift.
May we open ourselves to recognising the many
people and places in which God works, building
relationships with all who strive to protect God's
creation.
Lord in Your mercy

Hear our prayer

(Churches Together in Britain and Ireland)

CELEBRATING AT THE TABLE

Sharing the Peace

Peace is God's gift, both peace with God the
creator and peace with all creation. May our
gesture be the expression of this gift. Let us give
one another a sign of peace. The peace of the
Lord be always with you

(CAFOD)

SENDING OUT

A prayer for COP26

Father, we pray for you to raise up a generation of leaders with the courage to take responsibility for our changing climate, and the part we have played in it. We intercede for our politicians and leaders as they will gather at COP26 in Scotland. Move them to act in the best interests of all nations today, and all peoples in the future, in order to avoid catastrophic changes.

We ask You to fill the hearts of all who lead rich nations. Give them your mercy and compassion on poor countries already suffering the effects of a changing climate. Just as they have been moved to cancel debt in the past, encourage them also to release funds so that poor communities can adapt to the effects of climate change, and develop cleanly. And inspire us, Mighty God, to amend our lives for the sake of your Earth, your climate, your people.

All: Lord, in your mercy, lead our leaders and us to truth and transformation.

(Adapted from The Sanctuary Centre – climate change prayer)

We light a candle for climate justice

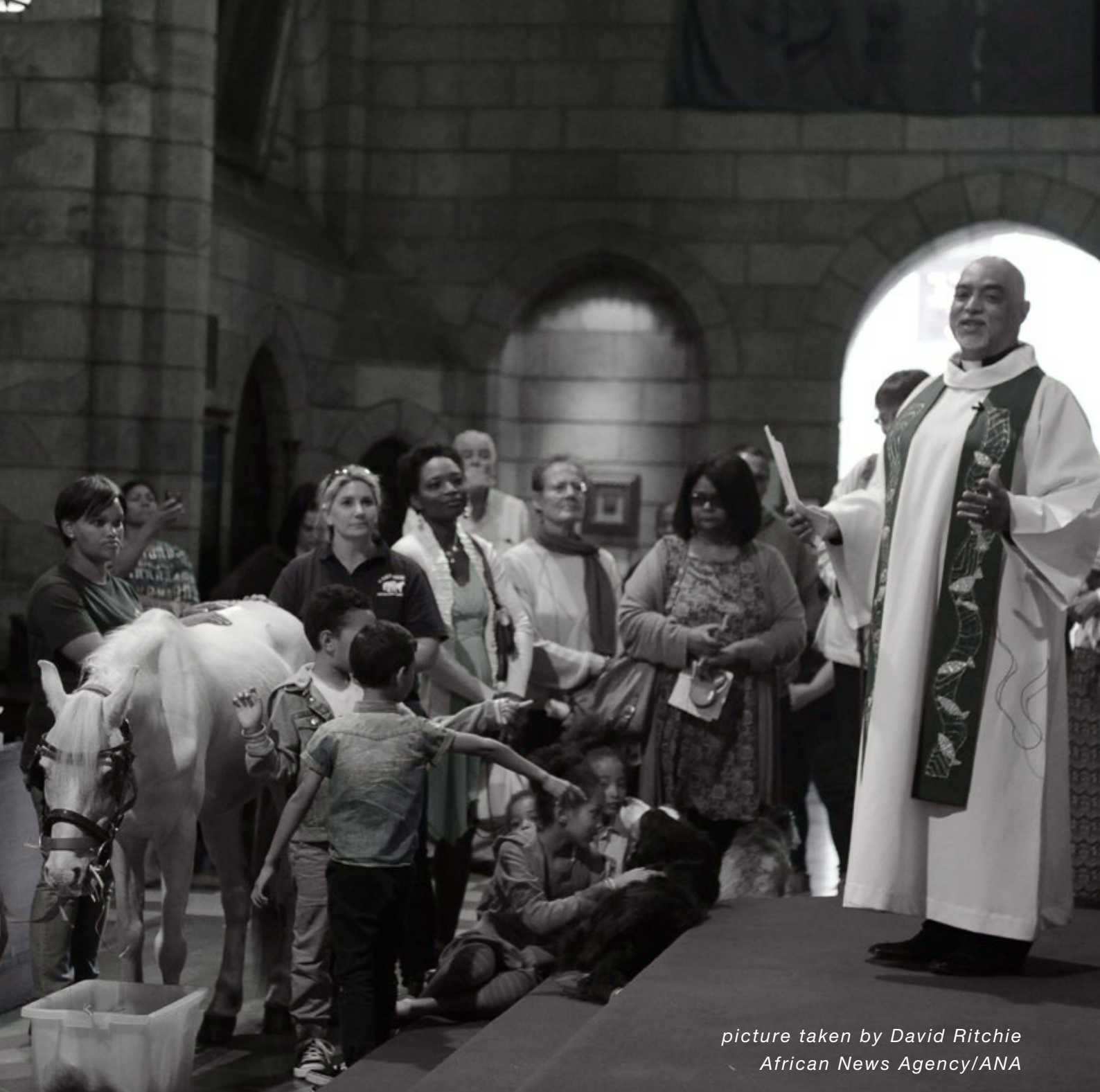
Spirit of God, you established the dance of Creation: Bring life out of death, bring order out of chaos.

Call us to radical action: to care for the web of Creation

To share our resources justly and to work for the renewal of our Mother, Earth.

We light this candle as we commit ourselves to act and pray for climate justice

(Archbishop Thabo Makgoba)



*picture taken by David Ritchie
African News Agency/ANA*

WEEK 5

St Francis Day: Hope for our Common Home

43

SEASON OF CREATION

COLLECT

**Jesus, who raised the dead to life
Help us to find ways to renew
what we have broken, damaged and destroyed in our
common home.
Give hope to those working for a greener future.
For you live and reign in the unity of the blessed Trinity
one God now and forever
Amen**

LITURGY

First Reading

Job 1:1; 2:1-10

Psalm 26

Second Reading

Hebrews 1:1-4; 2:5-12

Gospel

Mark 10 : 2-16

SERMON NOTES

Rev Dr Rachel Mash

NOTES ON THE READINGS

Job 1:1; 2:1-10

In the first chapter of the book of Job we are introduced to a remarkably prosperous farmer “the greatest among the people of the East” (1.3). His wealth was measured by his many thousands of head of livestock, and large family. His ten children not only provided personal joy but were also his security for the future. He considers his success to be the result of God’s blessing but at the same time, he worries that his children might sin against God, so he offers burnt offerings on their behalf.

Satan wants to know if Job only loves God because he has been blessed so richly? We can ask ourselves the same question – do we worship and give thanks to God only when things go well? And now we read that Satan is allowed to take everything away from Job, his wealth, his family, his health. In a traumatic day he loses them all to murder and violent storms. Where then is God when it hurts? Satan thinks that Job will curse God when the blessings are taken away, he will believe that he is being punished by God. He may either

stop his worship of God, or he will become bitter and abandon God. When Job loses his health, his wife calls on him to curse God, but he says “, “Shall we receive the good from the hand of God, and not receive the bad?” (Job 2:10).

Job’s response is remarkable- he continues to trust and worship God in the face of tremendous suffering. He knows that he did not deserve his former blessings, but he also realises that he is not to blame for the misfortunes.

In our current circumstances of the triple disasters of COVID, biodiversity loss and climate change, many people are facing the challenges of Job of losing material goods, jobs, health and family members. We must reject the prosperity gospel that equates financial success and material consumption with God’s blessing. We must also reject victim blaming. Many of the foreign nationals that we meet were former famers, able to sustain their families, but due to climate change and environmental degradation they are fleeing economic disaster. They are not to blame for their misfortunes.

“Shall we receive the good from the hand of God, and not receive the bad?”

Job 2:10

We must reject the prosperity gospel that equates financial success and material consumption with God’s blessing.

This passage also reminds us that in wealth or poverty we must cultivate regular prayer to sustain us so that even in times of suffering and loss we will be able to say, with Job “I know that my redeemer lives” (Job 19:25)

Hebrews 1: 1-4 and 2: 5-12

¹ In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. Heb 1:1-2

In verse 2 we clearly see that Christ was present at creation. Have a look at John 1:1-5, Colossians 1:15-20, Ephesians 1:9-12 if you think this is some new idea. We tend to talk of Jesus Christ, but we should rather talk of Jesus, the Christ. The Christ was present at Creation and was born as a human being at Bethlehem as the child – Jesus.

This helps us to understand more clearly the role of the Christ – God made the universe through Christ, and Christ sustains it ‘by his powerful word’. It is strange then that we often think that Christ died only to save the human beings, salvation is for the whole of Creation!

This means that we can have hope for the future of all creation, for it is Christ ‘for whom and through whom everything exists’ (2:10)

Mark 10:2-16

Once again, this week the Gospel speaks of the place of children in God’s kingdom. In Mark 10:14-15 Jesus blesses children and says,

‘Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.’

Almost everything that we do now has an impact on the future of our children. Scientists tell us that we have a ten year window of opportunity to avoid catastrophic climate change. If we do not act as individuals, communities and nations, then our children will inherit an impoverished and unstable world due to our failures to address climate and ecological breakdown.

Many children are suffering from deep anxiety and despair. Yet, God’s kingdom belongs to ‘such as these’. Young people are the prophets of our time. Let us listen to them, amplify their voices ... and act!!

A SERMON FOR ST FRANCIS DAY

Today we celebrate the day of St Francis, the patron saint of animals and biodiversity. Jesus had a very strong relationship with animals, dwelling amongst them as a sign of humility and connectedness with God’s creation. He is born in a stable, surrounded by animals, and is laid in an animal’s feeding trough (Luke 2;7). At the start of his ministry, during the 40 days in the wilderness, he stays amongst the wild beasts (Mark 1:13). He compares his itinerant lifestyle to that of animals (Luke 9:58) and chooses to enter Jerusalem on a humble donkey (Mark 11: 1-10). He is called the lamb of God and identifies himself with the Good Shepherd. He also challenges us to learn from nature, saying that we



God made the universe through Christ, and Christ sustains it ‘by his powerful word’.

Young people are the prophets of our time. Let us listen to them, amplify their voices ... and act!!

should trust God like the birds of the air do (Matt 6:25-26). Jesus' life was interconnected with animals, and he also learned from them.

Jesus' lifestyle challenges us to recognise our interconnectedness with all of creation. Unless we live in rural areas, many of us only connect with pets or companion animals. And yet we are part of the great community of all creation. We were created on the same day as the rest of creation, we did not even get a day for ourselves. Without pollinators the human race would not survive! Many of us only became aware of the sounds of the birds during hard lockdown when the traffic was quiet.

What about St Francis? He grew up quite rich and was known for partying and drinking. As a soldier he was captured and imprisoned and then God came to him in visions. One day as he prayed in a dilapidated church in San Damiano, at the edge of Assisi, he heard Christ say three times from the crucifix: "Francis, go repair my house, which, as you can see, is falling completely to ruin". He thought it was the church building but later came to realise that it is the earth which is our home.

He chose to stand with the poor, the marginalised, the suffering, and with the creatures of the earth. Many Christians think that we are stewards of creation, but St Francis went a step further, he said that we are kin of the animals – he called them his sisters and brothers. In the words of Pope John Paul II Francis "offers Christians an example of genuine and deep respect for the integrity of creation ... As a friend to the poor who was loved by God's creatures, St. Francis invited all creation — animals, plants, natural

forces, even Brother Sun and Sister Moon — to give honour and praise to the Lord. The poor man of Assisi gives us striking witness that when we are at peace with God, we are better able to devote ourselves to building up that peace with all creation which is inseparable from peace among all peoples."

COVID19 has taught us that we are all inter-related – as we destroy the habitat of wild animals, we risk more 'zoonotic' diseases – diseases which jump from animals to humans. COVID, SARS, MERS, Mad cow disease, avian flu, swine flu – we are experiencing more and more diseases that mutate from animals to humans. It is not only the destruction of animal's habitat that may put us at risk. Massive animal farming (CAFO) concentrated animal feeding operations cram animals together in unhealthy conditions. Perhaps the next great pandemic will come from one of the factory farms?

Scripture tells us that "the trees of the forest shall sing for joy before the Lord" (1 Chron 16: 33), how can the rainforest of the Amazon rejoice when 70 percent has been cut down to supply cattle for our endless demand for cheap meat? We are reminded of Jeremiah's words "I brought you into a plentiful land to eat its fruits and its good things. But when you entered you defiled my land and made my heritage an abomination." (Jer 2:7)

Come, let us restore our common home, which has fallen into ruin



Jesus' lifestyle challenges us to recognise our interconnectedness with all of creation.

St Francis went a step further, he said that we are kin of the animals – he called them his sisters and brothers.

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LITURGICAL MATERIAL FOR WEEK FIVE

GATHERING

Come Lord, come down
Come in, come among us
Come as the wind to move us
Come as the light to prove us
Come as the night to rest us
Come as the storm to test us
come as the sun to warm us
come as the stillness to calm us
come Lord come down
come in come among us

(Celtic daily prayer)

RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD

An Environmentalist's Creed

I believe in God, the Creator of the universe
and all that it contains.
I believe that God is love and that God's love is
evident in all created things.
I believe that everything exists for a purpose.
I believe that we can learn of this purpose only
after we acknowledge the cosmic harmony of the
universe.

I believe that in God's son, Jesus, is revealed
the ultimate purpose of humanity's existence - to
experience God's love to the fullest and to share
that love with all of Creation.

I believe that all of my efforts to love are tied
mystically to all of Creation.
That when any created thing is reduced from
being all that it can be, it reduces my capacity to
become all that I might become.
I believe that I have been called in a special way to
care for my planet.

I believe that God's Spirit can be
experienced in all of Creation.
I believe that the Church is called to be
a steward not just of souls but of every created
thing.

I believe that Jesus' resurrection points to the
transformation of Creation itself.

I believe that, with God's love, the effects of sin
can be overcome in my life and in the life of the
world. I look forward to the renewal of every
created thing at the end of time.

Amen

(Operation Noah Prayer)

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

With Saint Francis of Assisi, patron of ecologists,
let us bring before the Lord our requests for all of
us gathered here, for the Church and for the whole
world:

We pray for the Church: that she may be a beacon
of hope throughout the world, reminding us all of
our responsibility to care for and protect God's
precious gift of creation.
Lord, in your mercy...

We pray for the world, our common home: that
through God's grace we may hear its cry for the
damage done and be moved to protect it for future
generations to enjoy.
Lord, in your mercy...

We pray for all people who are facing droughts,
floods and storms: that God may grant them
strength and hope for the future as they work to
adapt to the changing climate.
Lord, in your mercy...

We pray for our parish and our local community:
that through the grace of God we may hear the
urgent cry of the earth and of the poor and be
inspired to respond at this crucial time.
Lord, in your mercy...

Let us bring before the Lord the prayers that lie in
each of our hearts as we listen to the cry of the
earth and the cry of the poor. [Pause]
Lord, in your mercy...

God, source of all goodness, we call you Creator;
you have made our wonderful world out of nothing
and constantly keep it alive. Help us to be full of
care and grateful for our home received from you

as a gift. May we work to keep this, our common home, filled with peace and justice through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

(Climate Sunday, CAFOD)

CELEBRATING AT THE TABLE

Invitation to communion

Creator God, meet us in this bread and wine and be with us on the journey which is the future that we and all creation may make anew the story of Life and all that may live to praise and magnify your name forever People of God, draw near in faith and travel far in grace.

THE SENDING OUT OF GOD'S PEOPLE

Prayer for our 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.

(Pope Francis, Laudato Si)



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



**SEASON OF
CREATION**

www.seasonofcreation.org

“Know that you can make a transformative difference to the future of all life on earth. You are not powerless. Your every action is suffused with meaning and you are part of the greatest chapter of human achievement in history”

(Christiana Figueres)

Quoted by Archbishop Thabo speaking at the
Presidents Climate Change Commission

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