




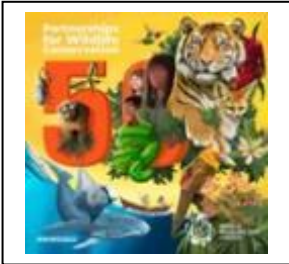
# JAEI

## March 2023 Environmental Prayer Diary

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

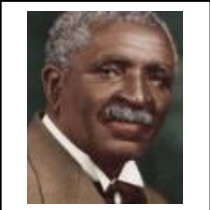

<p><b>Wednesday</b></p>	<p><b>1</b></p>	<p><b>The Environmental Theme for Lent this year is 202tree.</b></p> <p><i>“In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.” – Revelation 22:2.</i></p> <p><b>Trees are vital!</b> As the biggest plants on the planet, they give us oxygen, store carbon, stabilise the soil and give life to the world's wildlife. We can't do without them!</p> <div data-bbox="976 647 1477 748" data-label="Image"></div> <p>.... but all is not well in the “Tree World”! .... One of the biggest problems is <b>Deforestation</b> - the permanent destruction of indigenous forests and woodlands. The term does not include the removal of industrial forests such as plantations of gums or pines. Deforestation has resulted in the reduction of indigenous forests to four-fifths of their pre-agricultural area. Indigenous forests now cover <b>less than 21% of the earth's land surface.</b></p> <p>Trees absorb and store carbon dioxide. If forests are cleared, or even disturbed, they release carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases. <b>Forest loss and damage is the cause of around 10% of global warming.</b> There's simply no way we can fight the climate crisis if we don't stop deforestation.</p> <p><b>The Communion Forest</b> was launched at the 2022 Lambeth Conference as a practical, symbolic and an act of hope – a lasting expression of the conference theme: <i>“God's Church for God's World – walking, listening and witnessing together.”</i> It makes tangible our shared commitment to the Anglican Fifth Mark of Mission: <i>“Strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth”.</i> The Communion Forest aims to assist with afforestation and preserving biodiversity, providing habitats, protecting ecosystems and removing some carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.</p> <div data-bbox="1238 1261 1493 1458" data-label="Image"></div> <div data-bbox="448 1563 799 1803" data-label="Image"></div> <p>The Communion Forest is a global initiative comprising local activities of forest protection, tree growing and eco-system restoration undertaken by provinces, dioceses and individual churches across the Anglican Communion.</p> <p><b><a href="#">Click here for the full Lent calendar from GreenAnglicans and become involved in the Care of Creation this Lent.</a></b></p>
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<p>Thursday</p>	<p>2</p>	<p><b>World Hearing Day (3 March)</b></p> <p><b>2023 Theme: “Ear and hearing care for all! - Let’s make it a reality”</b></p> <p>World Hearing Day 2023 highlights the importance of integrating ear and hearing care within primary care, as an essential component of universal health coverage.</p>  <p>Ear and hearing problems are among the most common problems encountered in our communities. Hard of hearing stems from a complex list of causes – excessive noise is just one of them.</p> <p>Excessive noise has serious impact on the environment and its creatures as well, although we seldom think about this invisible threat. If you don’t like noise, imagine how pets and other animals feel about it</p> <p>From construction projects to busy roads, aeroplanes and railways, human noise is everywhere. It is an invisible cause of stress, posing serious risks to not only human health and wellbeing, but it also harms animals living in close contact with humans, in homes, farms and zoos.</p> <p>Noise is a distracting, scary or physically painful sound. The impacts of noise upon humans range from mild irritation to learning and memory problems, permanent hearing damage and heart disease. Abnormally loud noise, such as at music concerts, construction sites, or fireworks is controlled to protect human hearing. But noise is not regulated for other animals.</p> <p>Even some invertebrates such as hunting spiders are not immune as they detect sound from vibrations with their tiny leg hairs. It’s difficult to tell how sensitive an animal is to noise but what’s most important is whether noise in their environment is within their hearing range, rather than if the animal has a high or low frequency.</p> <p>Wild animals suffer chronic stress, fertility problems and change their migration routes in response to noise. Confined animals are often exposed to high levels of human-generated noise which they cannot escape experience pain, fear and cognitive problems.</p> <p>An ecosystem that exemplifies the harsh effects of noise pollution is the marine environment. Life underwater can naturally be very loud. Over time, marine creatures have adapted to use sound as a way to communicate with one another. One of the most devastating man-made sounds in the ocean is from “seismic surveying.” - a process that is used to locate fossil fuels. Whales rely on their own communication and man-made signals can disorient them. Other animals suffer from hearing loss and often die as a result. Thousands of invertebrates are also impacted by noise signals, including squid.</p> <p>Perhaps we cannot control what happens in cities on a daily basis, nor in the vast oceans, but we can control our own behaviour and take our furry (and not so furry) friends into account with the noise that we or our neighbourhood generates.</p> <p><b><i>Prayerfully consider what you can do to mitigate noise.</i></b></p>
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<p><b>Friday</b></p>	<p><b>3</b></p>	<p><b>World Wildlife Day</b></p> <p><b>2023 theme - Partnerships for Wildlife Conservation</b></p>  <p>The 2023 theme provides the opportunity to highlight the people who are making a difference.</p> <p>Partnerships operate on a large scale or involve a few people working in their local community to bring about change and promote sustainability. It will mean many things to different people, with each of those meanings being valid. For some, it could be organising a school sale to benefit a conservation group, for others it could be posting photographs online or painting pictures to raise awareness of endangered species. It could be in highlighting the NGO partnerships that are already mobilizing thousands of people in the pursuit of global goals. In every case, there is an answer to the question: What is the part you play in wildlife conservation?</p> <p>This upcoming year, World Wildlife Day (WWD) falls on <b>CITES' 50th Anniversary</b>. Throughout the past 50 years, partnerships have been at the heart of CITES, with Parties to the Convention working with the shared goal of ensuring sustainability of endangered species. UN agencies, private sector organizations, philanthropies and non-governmental organizations have been mobilized, working for conservation, the sustainable use of wildlife and in the fight against illegal trade and the depletion of wildlife. At national and local levels, partnerships are essential in every country across the globe to focus on the conservation of species and ecosystems. WWD will celebrate the bridge that CITES has been for these partnerships to form, making a significant contribution to sustainability, wildlife and biodiversity conservation.</p> <p>Sustaining existing partnerships and building new ones is critical for the future of life on earth. WWD should offer hope and a way forward. We know that we need to change our relationship with nature. Our health as a species depends on having healthy wildlife populations, healthy ecosystems and the biodiversity that allows for a healthy planet. This will need a concerted effort from groups working together, which is exactly what World Wildlife Day 2023 will be focusing on, with the theme: <i>Partnerships for Wildlife Conservation</i>.</p> <p><b><i>What will your partnership be?</i></b></p>
<p><b>Saturday</b></p>	<p><b>4</b></p>	<p>Architect of the Universe,  Your voice called out over the deep and darkness and brought forth light.  Your voice called out over the waters and brought forth life.  Your voice called out over this earth and brought forth our very beings.  Your voice continues to call out in our Universe and bring new hope and new life.  Help us to hear Your voice above the hum of the highway and the buzz of the business talk.  Help us to hear Your voice in the cries of children, in the soft tones of the sick, in the pleas of the poor.  May we hear, listen, and respond to Your voice in our lives and in our world.  In Your name we pray. <i>Amen</i>.</p>

<p><b>Sunday</b></p>	<p><b>5</b></p>	<p><b>Second Sunday in Lent</b></p> <p>Creator of light and dark, your presence is known in the rising and setting of the sun. With the faith of Abraham we see signs of your promises in both the stars of heaven and the deep and terrifying darkness of the cleft earth. When the rulers of this world threaten to destroy the creatures of your making, the spirit of your Son gathers us as a hen gathers her brood under her wings. May the certainty of our citizenship in heaven inspire and sustain our resolve in caring for your beloved earth.</p>
<p><b>Monday</b></p>	<p><b>6</b></p>	<p><b>The Great Turning</b></p> <p><i>When we look down on the Earth from space, we see this amazing, indescribably beautiful planet. It looks like a living, breathing organism. But it also at the same time, looks extremely fragile. —Ron Garan, NASA Astronaut</i></p> <p><i>I have set before you life and death, therefore choose life. —Deuteronomy 30:19</i></p> <p>Eco-philosopher, Earth elder, spiritual activist, and friend Joanna Macy (b. 1929) promotes a transition from the Industrial Growth Society to a Life-Sustaining Society. She calls it the Great Turning, a revolution of great urgency: “While the agricultural revolution took centuries, and the industrial revolution took generations, this ecological revolution has to happen within a matter of a few years.” She is hopeful as she sees many participating in: “1) Actions to slow the damage to Earth and its beings [holding actions]; 2) Analysis and transformation of the foundations of our common life; and 3) A fundamental shift in worldview and values.”</p> <p>The Centre for Action and Contemplation has focused primarily on the last dimension, fostering a change in consciousness. Here’s how Joanna Macy and Molly Brown describe this crucial shift in perception and values:</p> <p>It is hard to undertake the holding actions or initiatives . . . unless we are nurtured by deeply held values and ways of seeing ourselves and the world. The actions we take—and structures we build—mirror how we relate to Earth and each other. They require a shift in our perception of reality—and that shift is happening now, both as cognitive revolution and spiritual awakening. . . .</p> <p>The insights and experiences that enable us to make this shift may arise from grief for our world that contradicts illusions of the separate and isolated self. Or they may arise from breakthroughs in science, such as quantum physics and systems theory. Or we may find ourselves inspired by the wisdom traditions of native peoples and mystical voices in the major religions . . . that reminds us again that our world is a sacred whole in which we have a sacred mission.</p> <p>Now, in our time, these three rivers—anguish for our world, scientific breakthroughs, and ancestral teachings—flow together. From the confluence of these rivers we drink. We awaken to what we once knew: we are alive in a living Earth, the source of all we are and can achieve. Despite our conditioning by the industrial society of the last two centuries, we want to name, once again, this world as holy.</p>





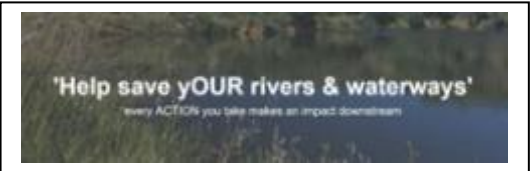
		<p>These insights and experiences are necessary to free us from the grip of the Industrial Growth Society. They offer us nobler goals and deeper pleasures. They help us redefine our wealth and our worth. The reorganization of our perceptions liberates us from illusions about what we need to own and what our place is in the order of things. [Moved] beyond tired old notions of competitive individualism, we come home to each other and our mutual belonging in the living body of Earth.</p> <p><b>From Richard Rohr's daily meditations</b>  <a href="http://www.cac.org">www.cac.org</a></p>
<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>7</b>	<p>"Reading about nature is fine, but if a person walks in the woods and listens carefully, he can learn more than what is in books, for they speak with the voice of God."</p> <p><b>George Washington Carver</b></p> 
<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>8</b>	
<b>Thursday</b>	<b>9</b>	<p><b>Affirmation of Faith</b></p> <p>We believe that God creates all things, renews all things, and celebrates all things. We believe Earth is a sanctuary, a sacred planet filled with God's presence, a home for us to share with our kin. We believe that God became flesh and blood, became a part of Earth, a human being called Jesus Christ, who lived and breathed and spoke among us, suffered and died on a cross, for all human beings and for all creation. We believe that the risen Jesus is the Christ at the core of creation reconciling all things to God, renewing all creation, and filling the universe. We believe the Spirit renews life in creation groans in empathy with a suffering creation, and waits with us for the rebirth of creation. We believe that with Christ we will rise and with Christ we will celebrate a new creation.</p>




<p>Friday</p>	<p>10</p>	<p><b>Encyclical Letter <i>Fratelli Tutti</i> of Pope Francis on the Fraternity and Social Friendship</b></p> <p><b>Chapter Two</b></p> <p><b>The characters of the story</b></p> <p>72. The parable begins with the robbers. Jesus chose to start when the robbery has already taken place, lest we dwell on the crime itself or the thieves who committed it. Yet we know them well. We have seen, descending on our world, the dark shadows of neglect and violence in the service of petty interests of power, gain and division. The real question is this: will we abandon the injured man and run to take refuge from the violence, or will we pursue the thieves? Will the wounded man end up being the justification for our irreconcilable divisions, our cruel indifference, our intestine conflicts?</p> <p>73. The parable then asks us to take a closer look at the passers-by. The nervous indifference that makes them pass to the other side of the road – whether innocently or not, whether the result of disdain or mere distraction – makes the priest and the Levite a sad reflection of the growing gulf between ourselves and the world around us. There are many ways to pass by at a safe distance: we can retreat inwards, ignore others, or be indifferent to their plight. Or simply look elsewhere, as in some countries, or certain sectors of them, where contempt is shown for the poor and their culture, and one looks the other way, as if a development plan imported from without could edge them out. This is how some justify their indifference: the poor, whose pleas for help might touch their hearts, simply do not exist. The poor are beyond the scope of their interest.</p> <p>74. One detail about the passers-by does stand out: they were religious, devoted to the worship of God: a priest and a Levite. This detail should not be overlooked. It shows that belief in God and the worship of God are not enough to ensure that we are actually living in a way pleasing to God. A believer may be untrue to everything that his faith demands of him, and yet think he is close to God and better than others. The guarantee of an authentic openness to God, on the other hand, is a way of practising the faith that helps open our hearts to our brothers and sisters. Saint John Chrysostom expressed this pointedly when he challenged his Christian hearers: “Do you wish to honour the body of the Saviour? Do not despise it when it is naked. Do not honour it in church with silk vestments while outside it is naked and numb with cold”.<sup>[58]</sup> Paradoxically, those who claim to be unbelievers can sometimes put God’s will into practice better than believers.</p> <p>75. “Robbers” usually find secret allies in those who “pass by and look the other way”. There is a certain interplay between those who manipulate and cheat society, and those who, while claiming to be detached and impartial critics, live off that system and its benefits. There is a sad hypocrisy when the impunity of crime, the use of institutions for personal or corporate gain, and other evils apparently impossible to eradicate, are accompanied by a relentless criticism of everything, a constant sowing of suspicion that results in distrust and confusion. The complaint that “everything is broken” is answered</p>
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		<p>by the claim that “it can’t be fixed”, or “what can I do?” This feeds into disillusionment and despair, and hardly encourages a spirit of solidarity and generosity. Plunging people into despair closes a perfectly perverse circle: such is the agenda of the invisible dictatorship of hidden interests that have gained mastery over both resources and the possibility of thinking and expressing opinions.</p> <p>76. Let us turn at last to the injured man. There are times when we feel like him, badly hurt and left on side of the road. We can also feel helpless because our institutions are neglected and lack resources, or simply serve the interests of a few, without and within. Indeed, “globalized society often has an elegant way of shifting its gaze. Under the guise of being politically correct or ideologically fashionable, we look at those who suffer without touching them. We televise live pictures of them, even speaking about them with euphemisms and with apparent tolerance”.<sup>[59]</sup></p> <p><b><i>Prayerfully consider how this is affecting our own Country</i></b></p>
<b>Saturday</b>	<b>11</b>	
<b>Sunday</b>	<b>12</b>	<p><b>Third Sunday in Lent</b></p> <p>Gracious host of all creation, you freely provide food and drink for all living creatures. You husband the fruitless tree. At our Lord’s Table, you nourish us with bread that is broken, and renew our spirit with poured-out wine. Liberate us from our dependence on stores of food and energy seized and held by imperial power. Lest we all perish, move our nation’s agriculture into policies and practices that respect the metabolisms of nature and resist the improvident mandates of our capital markets.</p>
<b>Monday</b>	<b>13</b>	<p>Father, we have been bad stewards of the world you have given us. We confess and repent of the ways in which we have misused your creation. Forgive us for the way we have exploited your world for selfish ends. Teach us to treat all creation with care, compassion and dignity, and to lead others along the same path, for the sake of your dear Son, Jesus Christ.</p>

<p><b>Tuesday</b></p>	<p><b>14</b></p>	<p><b>International Day of Action for Rivers</b></p> <p>The International Day of Action for Rivers is a day dedicated to solidarity – when diverse communities around the world come together with one voice to say that rivers matter. That communities having access to clean and flowing water matters. That everyone should have a say in decisions that affect their water and their lives.</p> <p>Rivers are key to restoring and maintaining the world’s biodiversity. River systems are the zone of Earth’s highest biological diversity – and of our most intense human activity. Freshwater ecosystems are the most degraded in the world and global action is needed to turn this around. By protecting and restoring our rivers, we play a critical role in bending the biodiversity curve. Rivers and the waters and nutrients they carry feed forests, wetlands and other terrestrial habitats, and are home to many of the more than 100,000 freshwater species, according to WWF.</p> <p>Rivers provide the water we need to survive - it goes without saying, but fresh, clean water is essential for humans and the environment.</p> <p>There are many actions we can take on a daily basis to acknowledge <i>The International Day of Action for Rivers</i> – and beyond .....</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cut down on chemicals and use environmentally friendly or organic household products, toiletries, fertilizers, pesticides – also be careful not to overuse any of these - this will prevent runoffs of the material into nearby water sources.</li> <li>• Limit your use of plastics and ensure that your plastic is recycled in the correct way.</li> <li>• Plant more trees and plants.</li> <li>• Never throw paints, oils or other forms of litter down the drain.</li> </ul> <p>The issue of water pollution should always be in the back of your mind during daily activities. <b><i>Prayerfully consider your own actions.</i></b></p>  
<p><b>Wednesday</b></p>	<p><b>15</b></p>	<p><b>International Spider Day (14 March)</b></p> <p>Essentially, World Spider Day (National Save a Spider Day) has its origins in the United States, in part to reduce arachnophobia, (a fear of spiders), and to conserve spiders and it is fitting that we celebrate our own South African spiders as well.</p> <p>People are usually afraid of spiders, mostly due to their bites being considered “deadly”. Most of this fear is unfounded and exaggerated. Spiders are incredibly useful to humans as they work as effective pest control among other things.</p>



		<p>The odds of being bitten by a spider are low, and most spider venom isn't seriously harmful to humans, with the exception of a few species such as button, sac and violin spiders – the bite from which will cause a lot of discomfort and a trip to your doctor or emergency room is well founded. On top of being mostly harmless, spiders are charismatic. Baboon spiders hiss like snakes and do an impressive threat display to deter predators, jumping spiders have huge eyes “all the better to see you with” and males dance to attract the attention of females, wolf spider youngsters hitch a ride on their mother's back, and male buckspoor spiders imitate wingless wasps.</p>  <p>Spiders are ecologically important and help to control insects that pose significant health and agricultural risks, such as mosquitoes, grasshoppers and beetles. In fact, in most ecosystems, spiders act as agents of population control, ensuring insect numbers are not overwhelming. Identified as generalist consumers, they also prey on a variety of organisms beyond insects, regulating the density of the species they go after.</p> <p>A fascinating group of creatures God, in his infinite wisdom, has created and they deserve our gratitude, conservation and protection.</p> <p><b><i>Reassess how you perceive spiders – realise that they are useful and essential to our very being.</i></b></p>
<p><b>Thursday</b></p>	<p><b>16</b></p>	<p><b>Prayer of intercession</b></p> <p>Creator God whose Spirit hovered over the face of the water at creation, we pray for all who suffer from lack of water today.  Teach us how to work towards a just and peaceable sharing of water among nations and peoples.  Pour down your Spirit upon those responsible for decisions concerning the purity and availability of water across our earth.  Help them to discover creative ways of providing enough clean water for all peoples and for all that lives and grows on our earth.  Your Son called himself ‘the Living Water’. Help us to solve, not add to, the problems of drought, flooding, sanitation and disease so that all may share the gifts of water and life.  Merciful God, forgive us for squandering, polluting and commodifying water.  Free us from our misuse and waste of this most precious gift.  God who led your people safely through the desert, we pray for all the women and girls who carry water for miles, and whose only supply is often contaminated. May clean, safe water be available to every living creature.  Creator God, hear our prayer and give us your deep love for the whole of Creation.  Amen</p>

Friday

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## The “Oh, There You Are” Prayer

“Three egg sacs hang in suspension in the garden near my doorstep. When I look for information online, most resulting websites discuss removal, infestation, means of discarding. The spider has lived between the wall and garden for a little over a month, a strange home in the alley’s wind tunnel. Gusts waver the plants during storms and windy nights, so the spider will sometimes spend hours swinging softly in her silk.



When an egg sac first appeared, I thought it was cloth or dust caught in the web, but then two more sacs joined the first, cottony orbs like planets stopped in mid-orbit around the spider’s still bulk. One darkened with spiderlings, their bodies softened with newness and the pressure of spherical suspension, all those legs blending and twining together.

The spider and I have an understanding, as spiders and girls understand sometimes wanting to be left alone. She is *Steatoda grossa*, a false widow. I have no desire to kill her. At first, she was frightened of my footsteps, my tendency to drop my keys into the space of her web. But we’ve learned each other’s habits. I know she rarely moves, preferring to sit fat and splayed in strings that reach to the ground. She is in the same place every morning as she was the previous night. And she doesn’t startle or hide when I run outside, headphones loud, in the early morning.

When spiderlings hatch, they’re supposed to float away on silken parachutes, born, then airborne. The egg sac never empties its cargo; the tangle of legs never meets the wind, the sky. The sacs go from grey and heavy to having the softest, whitest dead heart, a heart of fluff. Do spiderlings die or are they just not given a chance, a perfect array of circumstances that favours emergence and flying?

I mark seasons with spiders - sac spiders pale and wandering in the spring, giant grass spiders in their flat and funnelled autumnal webs, false widows shy and blind after days of rain, orbs and wolves heavy in the heat of a summer night. Marking change, emergence, and return. The habit of seeing a spider becomes a habit of noticing the presence of God.

A sudden recognition, a shift of light, a startle caused by recognition of another’s presence. *Oh, there you are. I was wondering where you’d been.*



It is hard to love spiders, to be a bleeding-heart for them. Early on, many people are taught to be frightened or taught that love is a weakness, or worse, misdirected. We’re taught that if you don’t love the right things in the right way, you are irrevocably wrong. You learn that your love teaches others how to cause you pain by harming what you care about.



I see in them my own worry - not only my worry of being harmed or having the space I call mine occupied by another’s scurrying - but my fear of making manifest all the destruction of which I’m capable. Fear of my image reflected back as monstrous, as destroyer who acts to assuage discomfort. Fear that I’ll narrow down the already infrequent circumstances in which I get a glimpse of that uncomfortable, startling God.

“What we conserve defines what we are or pretend to be,” wrote evolutionary ecologists François Sarrazin and Jane Lecomte last year in “[Evolution in the Anthropocene](#),” published in *Science*. Though they argue that we must come to a place where we ask not why we conserve, but why we destroy.

“Ask the animals, and they will teach you,” pleaded Job in the throes of watching all he loved crumble.



		<p>Looking back on a hard time - panic attacks that didn't stop, an irritable heartbeat whose meaning I couldn't parse - I see only the images I'd grasped, looking for anything to heal or distract me, using gaze as a prayer or as hope that I might recognize God somewhere. And now when I see <i>S grossa</i>, she's a friend, a reminder after the rains: <i>Oh, there you are.</i></p> <p>Much of conservation has been about studying the impacts of human modification. Rather than consider the evolutionary trajectory of creatures - in other words, their potential, their vast futures, their right to their bodies and their movements - we've assigned them worth based on their capacity to harm, their usefulness, or their attractiveness.</p> <p>"[Conservation] requires an interspecific form of altruism to achieve neutrality on nonhuman evolutionary trajectories, whatever our genetic distance toward nonhumans, the services we expect from them, their beauty, or our need for nature," Sarrazin and Lecomte argue.</p> <p>I often wonder at the simplicity of the Gospels, at the notion of God incarnating and then spending much of his bodily time making pretty obvious statements. Be kind. Respect children. Money and power make trouble.</p> <p>But then I think on whether that peaceable man was asking not for people to bestow the small salvations of which they were capable but asking them to consider why they destroy over and over again. Consider why we grow afraid and crush and stomp and bomb and say we are only being responsible.</p> <p>The love of God is scattershot. It is the love of the artist toward her work or the girl toward her spiders: neither dependent on usefulness, beauty, compliance, nor comfort. It's the love that asks <i>why destroy?</i> and finds myriad reasons but chooses against them, the love that writes the <i>Oh, there you are</i> prayer in the heart."</p> <p><b><i>Natalie Vestin</i></b></p>
<p><b>Saturday</b></p>	<p><b>18</b></p>	<p><b>International Day of Happiness (20 March)</b></p> <p>The General Assembly of the United Nations in its resolution 66/281 of 12 July 2012 proclaimed 20 March the International Day of Happiness recognising the relevance of happiness and well-being as universal goals and aspirations in the lives of human beings around the world and the importance of their recognition.</p> <div data-bbox="459 1563 788 1800" data-label="Image"> </div> <div data-bbox="1206 1308 1482 1559" data-label="Image"> </div> <p>We are spending more time indoors and online, however, recent scientific studies suggest that nature can help our brains and bodies to stay healthy. Spending time in nature can help relieve stress and anxiety, improve your mood, and boost feelings of happiness and wellbeing.</p> <p><b><i>Plan to spend some time in nature this week – your own quiet time with our Creator.</i></b></p>



<p><b>Sunday</b></p>	<p><b>19</b></p>	<p><b>Fourth Sunday in Lent</b></p> <p>Forgiving parent to all creation, your mercy is boundless. We squander the inheritance of this earth as mere commodity to be bought and sold for our comfort and entertainment. We refuse to share its bounty with our brothers and sisters in the great family of creation. Yet you welcome us home, and invite us to celebrate the feast of your new creation with all your children: those who swim beneath the waves of the sea and those who live in its soil; the children of the flowers in the meadows and the trees in the forest; all the children who roam over the land and the winged ones who fly with the winds; and yes, your human children too.</p> <p><i>Adapted in part from Thomas Berry, The Great Work: Our Way into the Future.</i></p>
<p><b>Monday</b></p>	<p><b>20</b></p>	<p><b>Meat Out Day</b></p> <p>World Meatout Day highlights the impact that the livestock industry has on the planet.</p> <p>Eating less meat won't save the planet, but it does help the environment because it lowers the demand for meat products, and in turn reduces the land use and environmental damage of the meat industry.</p> <p>About 40 percent of greenhouse gases come from agriculture, deforestation and other land-use changes. Meat - particularly beef - drives climate change in two ways: first, through cows' emission of methane, a potent greenhouse gas, and second, by destroying forests as they are converted to grazing land,</p> <p>Plant-based meat substitutes are making surprising inroads in SA despite our deep love of meat and hostility from the industry regulator. That could be heartening for climate scientists, who say shifting diets from emissions-heavy meat and dairy towards more plant-based foods is vital in the fight against climate change.</p> <p><i>Make a pledge to join "Meatless Monday" – or at least have a totally vegetarian meal once a week.</i></p> 
<p><b>Tuesday</b></p>	<p><b>21</b></p>	<p><b>International Day of Forests and Trees (21 March)</b></p> <p>The theme for 2023 is "<b>Forests and health.</b>" Sustainable forest use helps tackle the climate crisis and achieve the SDGs.</p> <p>When we drink a glass of water, write in a notebook, take medicine for a fever or build a house, we do not always make the connection with forests. And yet, these and many other aspects of our lives are linked to forests in one way or another.</p> <p>Forests provide ecosystem services such as food, fuelwood, medicinal plants, clean water and income, all of which indirectly impact human health and well-being.</p> 



		<p>Spending time in forests and around trees- even just looking at trees - reduces stress, lowers blood pressure and improves our mood. Numerous studies show that both exercising in forests and simply sitting looking at trees reduce blood pressure as well as the stress-related hormones cortisol and adrenaline.</p> <p>Forest sustainable management and their use of resources are key to combating climate change, and to contributing to the prosperity and well-being of current and future generations. Forests also play a crucial role in poverty alleviation and in the achievement of the <a href="#">Sustainable Development Goals</a> (SDGs). Yet despite all these priceless ecological, economic, social and health benefits, global deforestation continues at an alarming rate.</p> <p>We can do our little bit to conserve forests by ensuring that when we buy products made from wood, we insist that the wood has been ethically sourced – this can be verified with the <i>Forestry Stewardship Council</i> logo.</p> <p><i>Forests are too precious to lose!</i></p> <p><i>Creator God, Out of chaos you brought order. Out of nothingness you brought life. In the middle of all life stands the tree.</i></p> <p><i>Trees provide the air that nurtures all your creation. Birds make them their homes. Cats climb them for protection. Trees recycle life that has come before.</i></p> <p><i>Bless the trees of this word, loving God. Remind us to serve as their caregivers and protectors. Give them long limbs and long life. The gift of their breath is as special to us as the breath of the Holy Spirit.</i></p> <p><i>Amen.</i></p> <p><b>Rev. Dr. Chuck Currie</b></p>	
<p><b>Wednesday</b></p>	<p><b>22</b></p>	<p><b>20-26 March - National Water Week &amp; (World Water Day – 22 March)</b></p> <p>The National Water Week and World Water Day campaign aims to underline the importance of water and our responsibility in water conservation initiatives. While this may sound simple – and, in many people’s eyes, a bit daft – the lack of clean water around the world, alongside the damaging effects of global warming, water pollution and damaged water tables, is more important to understand than ever.</p> <p>The initiative is spearheaded by the UN, alongside UNESCO, the World Water Council and the WWF. Using the day as a basis for longer-term action, the UN aims to ensure that everyone in the world has access to safe</p>	



		<p>water by 2030, while not impacting the environment. This is outlined in <a href="#">Goal 6 of the Sustainable Development Goals</a> (SDGs).</p> <p>Water is one of the things that we take for granted in today's society – especially when there are torrential downpours and some of our dams are filled to capacity. But the lack of clean water in parts of the world is still a big problem. Pollution from industry and human consumption have also had an impact. These factors can lead to damaged water tables and other problems that affect our access to clean, safe drinking water. Globally, 2.2 billion people all over the world don't have access to safe water sources.</p> <p>However, although it may seem as though we do have enough water – after all the Vaal Dam has been pretty full (113% as of 19 February and <i>increased</i> over the following days ....) and flooding EVERYWHERE! ....., South Africa is still considered a water-scarce nation receiving insufficient and unreliable rainfall. The country receives a mean annual precipitation of 497mm/year, almost 50% less than the global average of 860mm/year. This water scarcity also presents in the way water resources are distributed in the country.</p> <p>During this National Water Week and World Water Day we need to take the opportunity to look more closely into the factors at play when it comes to clean water and our use or misuse of our water resources. It's an opportunity for everyone to think about what goes in to making sure that we have clean water and how we can make a difference. To mark the day, perhaps you could pledge as a family to try and reduce water waste. Things like not running the tap while you're brushing your teeth, by watering your garden early in the morning and many other ways, can all make a difference.</p> <p><b><i>Pray for the many millions of people who do not have access to clean water</i></b></p>
<p><b>Thursday</b></p>	<p><b>23</b></p>	<p><b>World Meteorological Day</b></p> <p>With today's technology, it's hard to imagine a time when we didn't know what the weather was going to be like. Instead of having a five-day forecast right on your weather app, you had to read wind patterns for weeks if you wanted to know whether you needed a rain jacket or a light sweater – and we rely heavily on the World Meteorological Organization for this information.</p> <p>The <a href="#">World Meteorological Organization</a> is the United Nations System's authoritative voice on Weather, Climate and Water that collects data from all over the world to help us better understand the weather and its impact on our lives.</p> <p>At the COP27 Conference held in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt in November 2022, the WMO released its first <a href="#">State of Global Water Resources report</a> on freshwater availability in a changing climate.</p> <p>"The impacts of climate change are often felt through water – more intense and frequent droughts, more extreme flooding, more erratic seasonal rainfall and accelerated melting of glaciers – with cascading effects on economies, ecosystems and all aspects of our daily lives. And yet, there is insufficient</p> <div data-bbox="1246 1240 1469 1458" data-label="Image"> </div>

		<p>understanding of changes in the distribution, quantity, and quality of freshwater resources,” said WMO Secretary-General Prof. Petteri Taalas.</p> <p>Once again, we realise just how interdependent all the Planet’s systems are and how they continually affect our daily lives. It stands to reason that we continue to employ every tactic that we can to protect every aspect of our Environment.</p> <p><b><i>Prayerfully consider this issue.</i></b></p>
<p><b>Friday</b></p>	<p><b>24</b></p>	<p><b>John 4:1-15</b></p> <p><b><i>Jesus Talks with a Samaritan Woman</i></b></p> <p>4 Now Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that he was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John— <sup>2</sup> although in fact it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples. <sup>3</sup> So he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee.</p> <p><sup>4</sup> Now he had to go through Samaria. <sup>5</sup> So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. <sup>6</sup> Jacob’s well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon.</p> <p><sup>7</sup> When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, “Will you give me a drink?” <sup>8</sup> (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)</p> <p><sup>9</sup> The Samaritan woman said to him, “You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?” (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)</p> <p><sup>10</sup> Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.”</p> <p><sup>11</sup> “Sir,” the woman said, “you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? <sup>12</sup> Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?”</p> <p><sup>13</sup> Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, <sup>14</sup> but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”</p> <p><sup>15</sup> The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.</p> 
<p><b>Saturday</b></p>	<p><b>25</b></p>	<p><b>Earth Hour</b></p> <p><b>Going beyond the hour ...</b></p> <p>Between 20:30 and 21:30 on the 25th March – you have the power to turn off your own lights as a symbol of commitment to the planet – without Eskom doing it for you.</p> 

		<p>Taking part in Earth Hour isn't only about committing for one hour on one day - it's about committing <i>every day</i> to take care of each other and the one home we all share. It's being mindful of your environmental actions on a daily basis in order to shape a brighter future for people and the planet.</p> <p>Taking part in Earth Hour is a symbol of unity. It is a symbol of hope. It is a demonstration of the power of collective action for our future and the planets.</p>
<b>Sunday</b>	<b>26</b>	<p><b>Fifth Sunday in Lent</b></p> <p>Creator Spirit, wild animals honour you for your care for us, your people. Help us to honour your care for them. All relationships within your creation are graced with beauty and purpose. You have blessed all creatures with capacity for both joy and care. You bind all things together in love, and mend all brokenness. Help us to love all that you love; help us to resist all abuse, whether of persons or things.</p>
<b>Monday</b>	<b>27</b>	<p><b>All Nature Feels Attractive Power</b></p> <p>All nature feels attractive power, A strong, embracing force; The drops that sparkle in the shower, The planets in their course.</p> <p>In this fine, sympathetic chain All creatures bear a part; Their every pleasure, every pain, Linked to a feeling heart.</p> <p>More perfect bond, the Christian plan Attaches soul to soul; Our neighbour is the suffering man Thou at the farthest pole.</p> <p>To earth below, from Heaven above, The faith in Christ professed More clear reveals that God is love, And whom He loves is blest.</p> <p><b>William Drennan</b> (1754–1820)</p> 
<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>28</b>	

<p><b>Wednesday</b></p>	<p><b>29</b></p>	<p>“We lose our souls if we lose the experience of the forest, the butterflies, the song of the birds, if we can't see the stars at night. “</p> <p><i>Thomas Berry</i></p>	
<p><b>Thursday</b></p>	<p><b>30</b></p>	<p><b>Confessions</b></p> <p>For our unwillingness to feel the suffering of others, and our readiness to live comfortably with injustice. <b>Forgive us, O God.</b></p> <p>For our self-righteousness that denies guilt, and our self-interest that strangles compassion. <b>Forgive us, O God.</b></p> <p>For our abuse of this planet and our exploitation of its resources. <b>Forgive us, O God.</b></p> <p>For our failings in community and our reticence to become involved. <b>Forgive us, O God.</b></p> <p>For the times we were too eager to be better than others, when we were too rushed to care, when we were too tired to bother, when we were too preoccupied to listen, when we were too quick to act out of motives other than love. <b>Forgive us, O God.</b></p> <p>May God forgive us, Christ renew us, and the Spirit enable us to grow in love. <b>Amen.</b></p> <p><i>Pietermaritzburg Agency for Christian Social Awareness.</i></p>	
<p><b>Friday</b></p>	<p><b>31</b></p>		<p><b>All things share the same breath</b> - the beast, the tree, the man...the air shares its spirit with all the life it supports.</p> <p><i>Chief Si'ahl Dkhw'Duw'Absh Tribe (Chief Seattle, Duwamish Tribe)</i></p>