

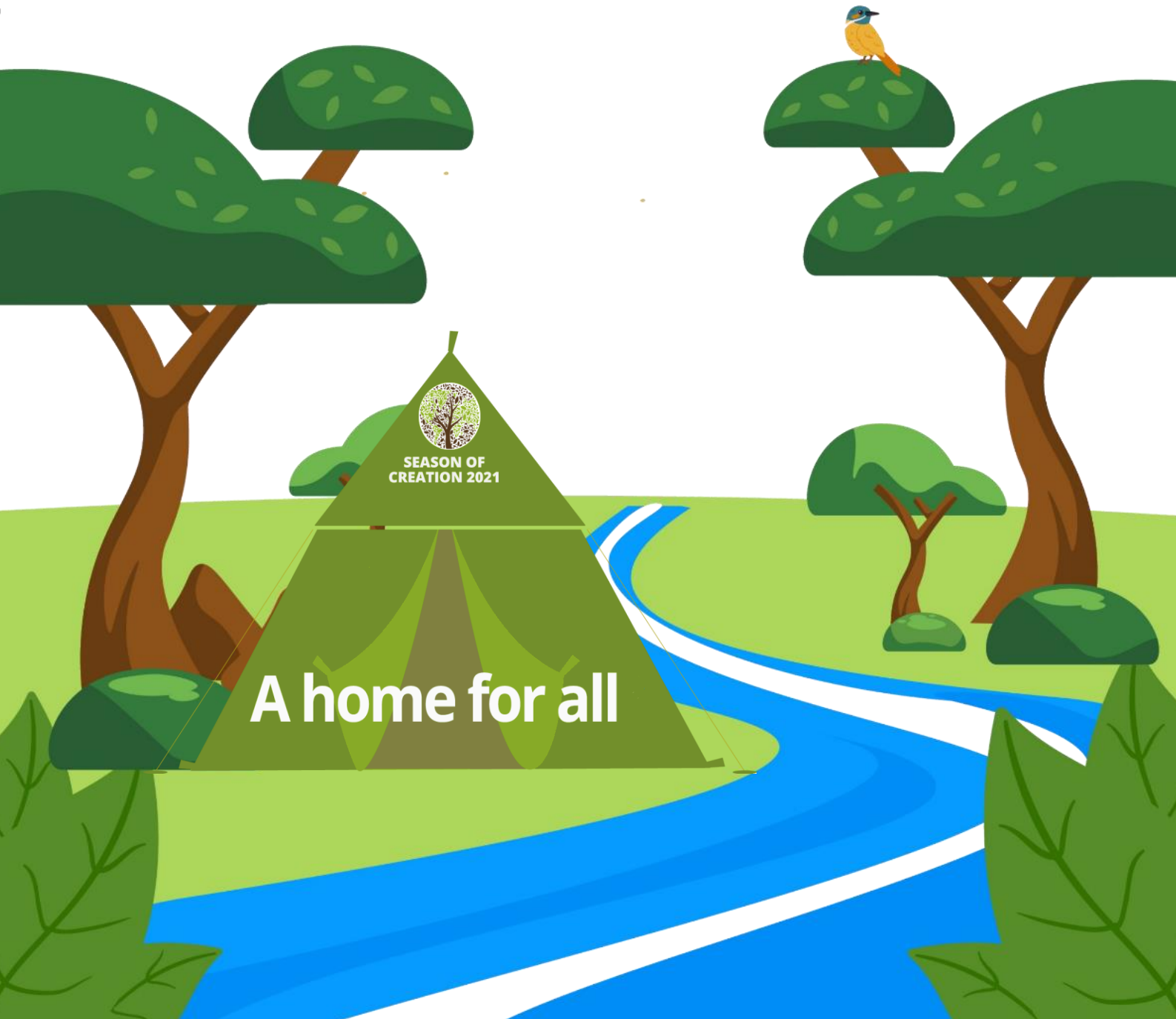


**SEASON OF
CREATION**

2021 Celebration Guide

A Home for All?

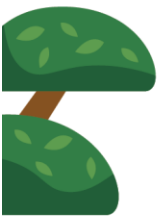
Renewing the *Oikos* of God



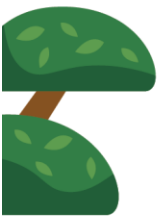
A home for all

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Introduction

Thank you for bringing your community together for the Season of Creation. Each year from September 1 to October 4, the Christian family unites for this worldwide celebration of prayer and action to protect our common home.

As followers of Christ from around the globe, we share a common role as caretakers of God’s creation. We see that our wellbeing is interwoven with its wellbeing. We rejoice in this opportunity to care for our common home and the sisters and brothers who share it.

This year, the theme for the season is **A home for all? Renewing the *Oikos* of God.**

This guide will help you learn about the season and plan to celebrate it. More resources, including webinars and prayer services, a Facebook group, and photos, are available online. Please visit SeasonOfCreation.org to access all the materials.

Season of Creation Steering Committee

actalliance



europaean christian **environmental** network



THE GLOBAL CATHOLIC CLIMATE MOVEMENT

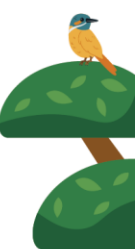
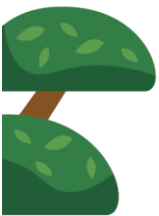
Lausanne/WEA
Creation Care Network



DICASTERY FOR PROMOTING INTEGRAL HUMAN DEVELOPMENT



World Communion of Reformed Churches



Faith leaders' invitation to join the Season of Creation

Our dear Relatives in Jesus our Saviour and Lord,

From September 1 to October 4, the Christian family celebrates the good gift of creation. This global celebration began in 1989 with the Ecumenical Patriarchate's recognition of the Day of Prayer for Creation and is now embraced by the wide ecumenical community. Prayer is a powerful experience and tool to raise awareness and foster transformational relations and ministry.

This year our theme is **A Home for All? Renewing the *oikos* of God**. It is our hope to work together to develop a larger Biblical and cosmological horizon, not only to be edified by the texts themselves, but to develop a new way to see Scripture, life, and Earth all in the *Oikos* of God and to acknowledge the wisdom from countless sisters and brothers helping all to renew our world as an interconnected and interdependent global beloved community.

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 in — 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. 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, though each has a different role.

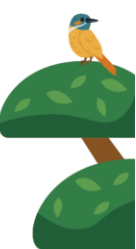
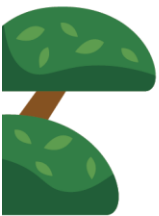
The *oikos* is a home for all but it is now in danger because of greed, exploitation, disrespect, disconnection and systematic degradation. The whole creation is still crying out. Since the dawn of the Industrial Revolution the geography where we recognize God's creative power has continued to shrink. Today only scraps of the human consciousness recognize God acting to restore and heal the Earth. We have forgotten that we live in the household of God, the *oikos*, the Beloved Community. Our fundamental interconnectedness has been at best forgotten, at worst deliberately denied.

It is our hope and prayer that we can become again this beloved community of intentional discipleship. We hope to move beyond the programmatic and didactic aspects of life to the prophetic and spiritual life, to the action and way of life, which is shaped by Jesus.

May we be the champions to renew life, the servant leaders of all life in the Beloved Community, the *oikos* of God.

In God's Grace,

Members of the Season of Creation Advisory Committee



Members of the Season of Creation Advisory Committee:

Bishop Marc Andrus, Episcopal Diocese of California

Rev. Dr Dave Bookless, A Rocha

Rev. Ed Brown, Care of Creation and Lausanne Catalyst for Creation Care

Dr. Celia Deane-Drummond, Director, Laudato Si' Research Institute, Campion Hall, University of Oxford

Msgr. Bruno-Marie Duffé, Secretary, Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development

Rev. Norm Habel, Season of Creation Project, Adelaide

Bishop Nick Holtam, Bishop of Salisbury, Church of England Environment Working Group

Dr. Hefin Jones, Executive Committee, World Communion of Reformed Churches

Metropolitan of Zimbabwe Serafim Kykotis, Greek Orthodox Archbishopric of Zimbabwe and Angola

Archbishop Mark Macdonald, National Indigenous Anglican Bishop, Anglican Church of Canada

Fr. Martin Michalíček, Secretary General, Consilium Conferentiarum Episcoporum Europae

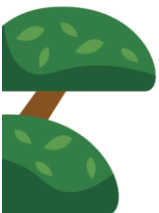
Mr. Marcelo Leites, General Secretary, World Student Christian Federation

Sr. Patricia Murray, Executive Secretary, International Union Superiors General

Dr. Alexandros K. Papaderos, Advisor of the Ecumenical Patriarchates of Constantinople

Dr. Paulo Ueti, Theological Advisor & Latin American Regional Director, Anglican Alliance

Dr. Ruth Valerio, Director Global Advocacy and Influencing, Tearfund



2021 Season of Creation Theme: A Home for All? Renewing the *Oikos* of God

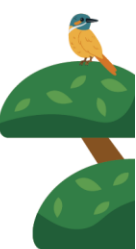
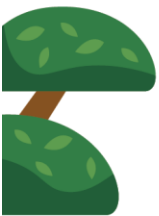
Each year, the ecumenical steering committee that provides this Celebration Guide proposes a theme for the Season of Creation. The 2021 theme is **A Home for All? Renewing the *Oikos* of God.**

The Psalmist proclaims “the Earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it.” There are two statements of faith at the heart of this song. The first is that every creature belongs to the Earth community. The second is that the entire community belongs to the Creator. A Greek word for this Earth community is *oikos*. *Oikos* is the root of the word *oikoumene*, or ecumenical, which describes our ‘common home’, as Pope Francis calls it in *Laudato Si’*. Our common home, the Earth belongs to God, and each beloved creature belongs to this common *oikos*.

By rooting our theme in the concept of *oikos*, we point to the integral web of relationships that sustain the wellbeing of the Earth. The word ecology (*oikologia*) describes the relationships between animals, plants, non-sentient organisms and minerals that each play a vital role in maintaining the balance of this beloved community. Each creature is important and contributes to the health and resilience of the biodiverse ecosystem in which it lives. Humans belong in the right relationship within this Earth community. We are made from the same stuff of the Earth, and are cared for by our co-creatures and the land.

Human relationships also have ecological significance. Economic (*oikonomia*), social and political relationships affect the balance of creation. Everything that we fabricate, use and produce has its origin in the Earth, whether mineral, plant or animal based. Our habits of consuming energy and goods affect the resilience of planetary systems, and the capacity of the Earth to heal itself and sustain life. Economic and political relationships have direct effects on the human family and the more-than human members of God’s *oikos*. Genesis 2.15 reminds us that among our co-creatures, the Creator has given humans a special vocation to tend and keep the *oikos* of God.

Sustaining just ecological, social, economic and political relationships requires our faith, reason and wisdom. By faith, we join the Psalmist in remembering that we are not stewards of an inanimate creation, but caretakers within a dynamic and living community of creation. The Earth and all that is not a given, but a gift, held in trust. We are called not to dominate, but to safeguard. By reason, we discern how best to safeguard conditions for life, and create economic, technological and political architectures that are rooted in the ecological limits of our common home. Through wisdom we pay careful attention to natural systems and processes, to inherited and indigenous traditions, and to God’s revelation in word and Spirit.



For centuries, humans (*anthropoi*) have ordered our lives and economies according to the logic of markets rather than the limits of the Earth. This false logic exploits the *oikos* of God, and makes creation a means to economic or political ends. The current exploitation of land, plants, animals and minerals for profit results in the loss of habitats that are homes for millions of species, including humans whose homes are at risk due to climate conflict, loss and damage. Reason tells us that in this anthropocene age, ecological and social disintegration and exclusion cause the current climate crisis and accelerate ecological instability. Wisdom equips us to find the answers, and pathways to build green economies of life and just political systems that would sustain life for the planet and people.

Faith gives us trust that God's Spirit is constantly renewing the face of the Earth. Within this horizon of hope, our baptismal call frees us to return to our human vocation to till and keep God's garden. In Christ, God calls us to participate in renewing the whole inhabited Earth, safeguarding a place for every creature, and reform just relationships among all creation.

During this liturgical Season of Creation, the ecumenical Christian family calls every household and society to repent and reshape our political, social and economic systems towards just, sustainable economies of life, which respect the life-giving ecological limits of our common home.

We hope that this Season of Creation renews our ecumenical unity, in our baptismal call to care and sustain an ecological turning that will ensure all creatures can find their home to flourish, and participate in renewing the *oikos* of God.



Season of Creation 2021 Prayer

Creator of All,

We are grateful that from your communion of love you created our planet to be a home for all. By your Holy Wisdom you made the Earth to bring forth a diversity of living beings that filled the soil, water and air. Each part of creation praises you in their being, and cares for one another from our place in the web of life.

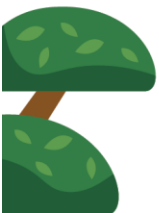
With the Psalmist, we sing your praise that in your house “even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young.” We remember that you call human beings to keep your garden in ways that honor the dignity of each creature and conserve their place in the abundance of life on Earth.

But we know that our will to power pushes the planet beyond her limits. Our consumption is out of harmony and rhythm with Earth’s capacity to heal herself. Habitats are left barren or lost. Species are lost and systems fail. Where reefs and burrows, mountaintops and ocean deeps once teemed with life and relationships, wet and dry deserts lie empty, as if uncreated. Human families are displaced by insecurity and conflict, migrating in search of peace. Animals flee fires, deforestation and famine, wandering in search of a new place to find a home to lay their young and live.

In this Season of Creation, we pray that the breath of your creative Word would move our hearts, as in the waters of our birth and baptism. Give us faith to follow Christ to our just place in the beloved community. Enlighten us with the grace to respond to your covenant and call to care for our common home. In our tilling and keeping, gladden our hearts to know that we participate with your Holy Spirit to renew the face of your Earth, and safeguard a home for all.

In the name of the One who came to proclaim good news to all creation, Jesus Christ.

Amen.



Season of Creation 2021 Logo: Abraham's Tent

This year's logo for the Season of Creation is Abraham's tent, symbolizing "A home for all".

Abraham and Sarah opened their tent as a home for three strangers, who turned out to be God's angels (Genesis 18). By creating a home for all, their act of radical hospitality became a source of great blessing.

Abraham's tent is a symbol of our ecumenical call to practice creation care as an act of radical hospitality, safeguarding a place for all creatures, human and more human, in our common home, the household (*oikos*) of God.

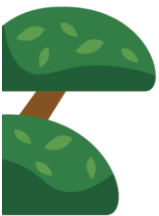
This Season of Creation, consider pitching "Abraham's tent" in the church garden or green space as a sign of hospitality for all beings who are excluded. Communities could be invited to pray with and for the vulnerable of the community. Perhaps bring parts of creation into the tent to pray with you. The tent can also be present as a symbol during events or in worship throughout the Season of Creation as a symbol of the community's intention to create a home for all.

Abraham's tent would have likely been open on multiple sides, so anyone passing by would feel welcome. The tent is often an emblem of dialogue, especially between monotheistic religions born from Abraham. Today, it is a sign of our interfaith and interdisciplinary call to create safe spaces for dialogue and discernment.

The tent represents a place of shelter or refuge. It links us with the homeless, refugees, and all who are on the move and displaced by the effects of climate change. Psalm 84 reminds us that in God's house (*oikos*), even the sparrow finds a home to build a nest and lay her eggs.

In the Gospel of John 1:14, we read that the "the Word became flesh and pitched his tent among us." The symbol of the tent can remind us of how Jesus came to dwell among us as a sign of God's love. Love is the root of our faith, which compels us to love our neighbors by tilling and keeping our common home.

The tent is also a sign of simplicity. Particularly among young people, the tent and the backpack symbolize what is essential, sufficiency, living within our means, and travelling lightly upon the earth. Like nomadic and semi-nomadic people today, Abraham and Sarah knew what it meant to be vulnerable, depending upon the goodness of the land, respecting its rhythms, and living in trust. The tent is a sign of the grateful pilgrim who knows that as we pass through this life, our footprint must be light upon the Earth.



Ideas to Celebrate the Season of Creation

The Season of Creation is a time to renew our relationship with our Creator and all creation through celebration, conversion, and commitment. It is an annual ecumenical season where we pray and act together as a Christian family for our common home.

There are many different ways to celebrate the Season. The ecumenical Season of Creation network has suggested a few ideas, which are available below. Be sure to visit SeasonofCreation.org for other ideas and campaigns, including denomination-specific initiatives.

As you are planning your event, be sure to register it on the website at SeasonofCreation.org. When you register, your celebration will become visible on the global Season of Creation map to inspire others and increase attendance. We will also contact you to provide additional resources.

However you celebrate, be sure to share your experience

Photos and videos

- Be sure to take photos of your community in action. Your photos will be shared with people around the world, and could inspire prayers and action to protect creation. (*Kindly ask consent to share people's images, and refrain from close ups of children without parent/guardian permission*). Please upload your photos at SeasonofCreation.org.

Social media and blogs

- Post images and stories while you plan and during your celebration. Be sure to tag your post or tweet with #SeasonofCreation, and it will appear on the Season of Creation website.
- Join our English-language Facebook community and share your experiences.
- Write a blog post about your community's Season of Creation celebration.

Pray and worship

Prayer is at the center of our lives as Christians. Praying together deepens our relationship with our faith and brings forth new gifts of the Spirit. As Jesus taught us, "where two or three are gathered in my name, I am with them" (Matthew 18:20).

The following suggestions will help you shape a prayer or worship service during the Season of Creation.

Host an ecumenical prayer service

Hosting a prayer service is a simple and beautiful way to celebrate the Season. While a prayer service that stays within your church community is welcomed, this Season offers a wonderful opportunity to connect with Christians outside of your denomination or network.

If interested, contact local Christian communities of denominations different from your own, and ask the clergy or justice coordinator whether he/she would like to collaborate in co-hosting a prayer service for the Season of Creation. If you send an email, be sure to share a link to the Season of Creation [website](#) and to include information about the season.

In light of this year's theme, see how you might intentionally include the needs and participation of the most vulnerable in your community. You might also consider taking up a collection to support a particular issue.

Start with the event checklist. Ask all participating communities to advertise the service. Broadcasting information via social media, print and web media will ensure good attendance and lead to a diverse, dynamic celebration. Sample flyers, bulletin inserts, and pulpit announcements are online. Appoint either one clergy person or a group of clergy people from participating churches to lead the prayer service.

The Prayer service included below in this Celebration Guide was developed for the 2021 Season of Creation. You can use and adapt this service to your context.



Ecumenical Prayer Service for the Season of Creation

An ecumenical working group has created an order of prayer based on this year's theme, A Home for All? We encourage you to use this prayer service to mark the beginning and end of the Season of Creation, at events that you host during the season, or to incorporate into your community's worship throughout the Season.

In addition to several ecumenical resources, the 2021 prayer service is informed by prayers from the tradition of Indigenous Christians. In this context, the phrase "the people" is a reference to all species, minerals even stars in the heavens. Among these people are the human people, the plant people, the four-legged, flying and swimming peoples, rock people, star people and more. All "people" should find their home in the *oikos* of God.

As you plan your service, consider pitching "Abraham's Tent" in the midst of the prayer service as a symbol of the community's intention to create a home for all. You may also wish to set the space with natural items that represent the land and other "peoples" from the beloved community who call your place "home".

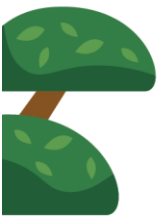
You may access the full text of the service by [following this link to the document online](#), or [in the appendix at the end of this Celebration Guide](#).

Integrate creation related themes and Abraham's Tent into Sunday liturgies

Encourage your pastor/priest to preach a sermon on creation or integrate creation themes into prayers or Bible studies during the Season of Creation. Each week, lectionaries provide an opportunity to explore the Season of Creation theme. [Here you will find reflections](#) on the Old Testament, Psalm, Epistle and Gospel readings for each week during the Season of Creation. More ideas can be found at <http://sustainable-preaching.org/sermon-suggestions/>

Consider how creation themes can also be incorporated into other aspects of the service, such as the procession, offertory, Eucharistic prayers, children's messages and more.

Consider pitching "Abraham's tent" a tent in the church or church garden as a sign of hospitality for all beings who are excluded. Communities could be invited to pray for and with the vulnerable of the community. The tent could be present in liturgies or events throughout the Season of Creation as a symbol of the community's intention to create a home for all.



Hold your worship service outside

To celebrate God’s creation fully, it is good, where practical, to take our worship outside a building and to worship in the context of God’s creation—which is already worshipping God eloquently as every creature, and even mountains, rivers and trees worship the Lord simply by doing what God created them to do. You might like to consider a site of environmental significance. If it is a place of great natural beauty, the focus would be on giving thanks to God and committing ourselves to protecting the site and others. If it is a place of environmental degradation, the focus is on confessing our environmental sins and committing to actions of healing and restoration.

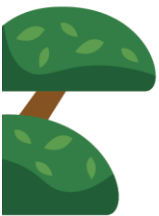
- Depending on your style of worship and the weather, consider an informal service or brief Eucharist that can be incorporated into the ecumenical prayer service offered in this Celebration Guide, or other creation-centered liturgies.
- For your offertory, ask children and adults to gather symbols from nature and take them to the holy table as “fruit of the earth and work of human hands” alongside the bread and wine.
- Include a moment of silence to listen to, and wordlessly join in with the song of creation’s worship.
- In place of the sermon, divide into groups for a short Bible study.
- Consider pitching “Abraham’s tent” a tent in a church or local garden as a sign of hospitality for all beings who are excluded. Invite people to pray for and with the vulnerable of the community. The tent can also be present in liturgies or events throughout the Season of Creation as a symbol of the community’s intention to create a home for all.

Organize a Creation Walk or Pilgrimage

You might consider organizing a contemplative walk outside to meditate on the gift of God’s creation and our response to be in deeper communion with all life. You could organize a pilgrimage to a significant ecological site or to a site that witnesses to ecological or social injustice. You could study ecologically themed Scriptures, or prayers such as this [ecological rosary](#), while walking. Your pilgrimage could also culminate in a prayer service, or the Earth Examen.

Engage your local ecology through this Earth Examen:

An examen is a way of beholding an object or being present in prayerful wonder. Through a series of questions, you are invited to reflect on God’s presence and the goodness of that which you behold. During this Season of Creation, consider contemplating a part of your local ecology. This is an exercise that you can choose to do alone, or with a group.



Pick a natural or agricultural place to contemplate. A forest. A river. A city street with a natural area. An urban park. A farmer's field. A hilltop. Find a comfortable place to rest in or near this place. Enter into prayer in whatever way is natural to you. Invite Holy Wisdom to open the eyes of your heart. When you are ready, this resource will guide you in this spiritual practice. You may follow the link to the website, or the appendix to this Celebration Guide.

Encourage sustainable living

Make sustainable lifestyle changes on an individual level

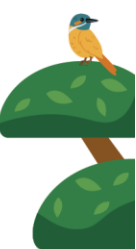
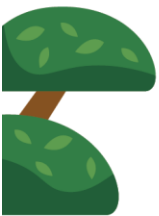
The Season of Creation is a wonderful time to reflect on how our lifestyles affect the environment and to make a commitment to more sustainable ways of living. The good news is that making more sustainable lifestyle choices in just a few areas adds up to a big difference overall. As the saying goes, "Let us live simply so that others may simply live." Living simply is a way to ensure our planet is truly a home for all.

- Calculate your carbon footprint using an online calculator [like this one](#)
- Join the Season of Creation sustainability challenge which includes weekly themes related to diet, energy, consumerism, and transportation. (check the Season of Creation website for details)
- Engage a small group of people in your community to join you in the group to pray, reflect, and support one another

Make sustainable changes on an institutional level

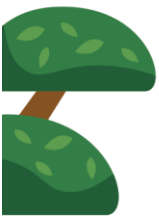
Changes at institutional level can have a huge impact and result in tangible reductions in negative environmental impacts.

- Practice the [Roadmap for Congregations, Communities and Churches for an Economy of Life and Ecological Justice](#) developed by the World Council of Churches to change the way we deal with the economy and our ecological surroundings.
- Conduct an [energy audit](#) of your institution's facilities to look at key areas such as heating, lighting, ventilation and insulation offer many opportunities for immediate footprint reduction.
- Many Church networks now have platforms to support families, churches and congregations that want to make sustainability changes. A Rocha has developed [Eco-Church](#). The Episcopal Church has [this pledge](#). The Vatican is launching an interactive "[Laudato Si Action Platform](#)"[2], which will support Catholic Institutions and families to review their impact and take action across a number of areas.



Hold a Sustainability Event

- Organize a **beach or waterway clean up** during International Coastal CleanUp in September. A Rocha offers a [toolkit](#) to host a beach clean-up.
- Take your clean up a step further by including a **plastics brand audit**, a citizen science initiative organized by Break Free from Plastics that involves counting and documenting the brands found on plastic waste collected at a cleanup to help identify the companies responsible for plastic pollution.
- Hold an educational event where you serve a [meal that is good for the climate!](#)
- Start a [community garden](#) that can support and invite the local community to participate. See [here](#) for how to make your garden a climate garden.
- Consider having an ecumenical [tree planting event](#) that incorporates a [prayer service](#). Guidance for how to select a tree and choose a site is [here](#). You can link it to the [75 trees sustainability event to support UN Initiative on Climate Change](#)
- **Develop a or a healthy habitat** to help restore local lands and support local biodiversity such as this [Saint Kateri Habitat](#). More information is available here in the [World Wildlife Fund Biodiversity Toolkit](#).



Advocacy: Participate in campaigns that call for ecological restoration

The 2021 Season of Creation theme is *A Home for All?: Renewing the Oikos of God*. This theme is in alignment with a global call to recognise that “the Earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it.” This means every creature belongs to the Earth community and the entire community belongs to the Creator and we are called as custodians to care for our common home in an integral ecological sustainable manner. The year 2021 is a “super year” for audacious action to be taken on the dual crises of climate and biodiversity collapse, plus the global health pandemic that have gripped our common home. All these crises have been caused by human excesses and lack of cooperation. Several scientific papers have established that the destruction of natural ecosystems increases the likelihood of future pandemics like Covid-19. This year is a critical moment to leverage ambitious targets and momentum on implementation in the international negotiations at two United Nation Conference of Parties (COP) meetings; the first in October discussing Biodiversity, and the second in November discussing Climate Change.

The first COP on 11-24 October 2021 is the Convention on Biodiversity (COP 15), where the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework will be negotiated in light of the global community failing to reach the Aichi targets on biodiversity management set ten years ago. The second meeting from 1-12 November 2021 is COP26 on climate change where new national commitments to tackle the climate crises under the Paris Agreement are due to be delivered. The grave crises these COP processes are intended to address are deeply and integrally connected, and so are their solutions.

Here are some key advocacy asks for governments related to these COPs:

- Ensure that human rights, social justice and integrity of creation are at the centre of the response to the current climate, public health, and biodiversity crises.
- Governments must implement solutions that prioritise protecting people, the planet and all of nature, including natural ecosystems over profit. Solutions must prioritise the needs of the poor and marginalised.
- All governments must commit to no more loss of biodiversity, with biodiversity recovering worldwide from 2030 onwards.
- All governments need to take urgent action to limit warming to 1.5°C temperature target and put in place legislation, policies and measures to achieve this target in a sustainable manner.
- Governments must put in place the policies and legislation to achieve global net-zero emissions as soon as possible, which should include phasing out fossil fuels, investing in renewable and nature-friendly energy for all, and conserving and

restoring natural ecosystems. High emitting countries must take the lead in accordance with the common but differentiated responsibilities principle.

- Governments should put GHG-neutral nature-based solutions at the heart of their climate action, especially to improve the resilience of communities, including indigenous peoples, and countries to climate impacts, based on locally-led ecosystem preservation and restoration.
- Climate finance needs to be urgently and significantly scaled up for poor and vulnerable countries and communities on the frontline of the climate crisis.

More detailed asks for COP15 and COP26 can be found on the Season of Creation website.

Take Action

This moment in time is a kairos moment for all Christians to rise up in unanimity to support audacious targets to save our common home. Noting that both COPs will take place after the Season of Creation, we could not ask for a more timely moment to rise up.

We propose the following joint actions that would allow the Christian Churches to support global advocacy efforts for just and ambitious outcomes on biodiversity and climate next year.

1. Join a global advocacy campaign

- Join the campaign to ‘Pray and Act for Climate Justice’, in the run up to COP26 <https://www.prayandact4climate.org/>. This campaign brings together people of faith to act and pray for climate justice.
- Join the [Catholic petition](#) on the climate crisis and biodiversity leading up to both COP15 Biodiversity Summit and COP26 Climate Summit

2. Engage locally

- Local decision makers, such as mayors, councillors, church leaders, members of national governments or parliaments, and others, may be involved in making decisions affecting climate and biodiversity. You can influence decisions locally and globally by speaking to local and national decision makers about these issues. Phone their office, send them an email, or organise a meeting with them to raise your concerns.
- Consider developing a statement about your concerns about climate and biodiversity. These can be shared with decision makers and the media throughout Season of Creation to make it clear what action is needed to tackle these crises. Talking points will be available on the Season of Creation website.

- Further resources with ideas for how to organise advocacy engagements (online, offline, high-level meetings and events, grassroots meetings and events), such as the Lutheran World Federation's Guide [The critical role of faith actors in national climate debate: Understanding Nationally Determined Contributions](#), which will be available through the Season of Creation website.

3. Join a mobilization

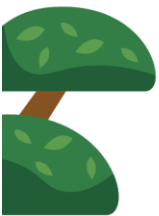
- Young people and their supporters from all generations are coming together in global strikes in the movement, known as **Fridays for the Future**. Public mobilisation sends a strong message to decision makers that change is needed. Visit [Fridays for the Future](#) or [Laudato Si' Generation](#), the movement of young Catholics, for more information on the strikes. You can also organise your own demonstration at your church, school, or government building, to raise attention to the issues.

4. Encourage institutions to divest

- Despite the climate and ecological crisis caused by burning fossil fuels, many institutions are continuing to invest their money in fossil fuel production. Join a campaign for institutions to divest their finances from fossil fuels, and investment in renewable energy instead: [Operation Noah's Bright Now campaign](#), and [Big Shift Global](#) campaign.

Share your advocacy work

- Follow the campaigns on our [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) pages, and amplify our **advocacy asks** on your social media handles by using #SeasonofCreation. Also, join the [Season of Creation public group](#) to get inspiring updates and share your events and experiences.
- Share photos, poems and paintings about climate, biodiversity and post- COVID changes in your community to tell the story of nature around you and your relationship with creation.
- Write a blog about the activity you organised or participated in, or about the significance of Creation Time for you and share with us.



Global calendar of events

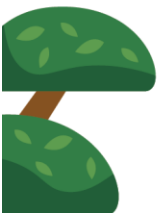
While each Christian community around the world celebrates the Season of Creation in its own way, a few events present opportunities to tie all communities together, and you can access them through [the global calendar of events on the Season of Creation website](#). You are particularly invited to join two online prayer services that will mark the opening and closing of the Season of Creation.

September 1: Online Prayer Service for Creation Day/World Day of Prayer for Creation

Creation Day, also called the World Day of Prayer for Creation, opens the season each year. Pope Francis, Patriarch Bartholomew, the World Council of Churches, and many other leaders have called the faithful to celebrate it. Christian leaders will be gathering in Assisi for an ecumenical prayer service. Globally, Christians are invited to join an online prayer service to come together in a joyful celebration of our common cause. More information can be found at [SeasonofCreation.org](#).

October 4: St. Francis Day

Many traditions view St. Francis as an inspiration and guide for those who protect creation. October 4 is his feast day and the last day in the Season of Creation. The faithful around the world will come together in an online prayer service to reflect on how St. Francis has informed their spiritual journey and to celebrate our month-long journey together. You can find registration information about the online prayer service on the [Season of Creation website](#) and social media.



Join us on social media

Join us in prayer and reflection and share exciting news about your celebration on social media. A supportive global community is forming on Facebook and Twitter.

Join the global community by using the #SeasonOfCreation hashtag on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook. Hashtag posts may appear on the [Season of Creation website](#).

We invite you to like or follow the Season of Creation [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) pages, as well as join the [Season of Creation public group](#) to get inspiring updates and join the conversation.



About the Season of Creation

The Season of Creation is the time of year when the world's 2.2 billion Christians are invited to pray and care for creation. This liturgical season runs annually from September 1 through October 4.

The Season of Creation unites the global Christian family around one shared purpose. It also provides flexibility in celebrating prayer services and engaging in a variety of actions to care for creation.

History

September 1 was proclaimed as a day of prayer for creation for the Eastern Orthodox Church by Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios I in 1989. It was embraced by other major Christian European churches [in 2001](#), and by Pope Francis for the Roman Catholic Church [in 2015](#).

In recent years, many Christian churches have begun celebrating the "Season of Creation" (also known as Creation Time) between September 1 and October 4, the Feast of St. Francis that is observed by some Western traditions. St. Francis is the author of the Canticle of the Creatures, and the Catholic saint of those who promote ecology.

Several statements from the past few years have called the faithful to observe this month-long season, such as those of the Catholic Bishops of the Philippines [in 2003](#), the Third European Ecumenical Assembly in Sibiu [in 2007](#) and the World Council of Churches [in 2008](#).

The Steering Committee

As the urgent need to solve the environmental crisis continued to grow, Christian churches were called to strengthen their united response. The Season of Creation ecumenical steering committee came together to provide resources to empower Christians respond to of our faith, each in the way of his or her own denomination or network, during this shared season of reflection and action.

The steering committee is comprised of the World Council of Churches, Lutheran World Federation, the Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, World Evangelical Alliance, Global Catholic Climate Movement, Anglican Communion Environmental Network, Lausanne Creation Care Network, the World Communion of Reformed Churches, the European Christian Environmental Network, ACT Alliance and Christian Aid.

As an ecumenical network, we are inspired by the urgent call from Pope Francis' *Laudato Si'*, "for a new dialogue on how we are shaping the future of our planet" and "We require a new and universal solidarity" where the most vulnerable are supported and to enable them to in dignity. We invite you to join us in these efforts.

actalliance



Lausanne/WEA
Creation Care Network



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We are grateful to the following people who contributed to the writing, development, review, and editing of this publication.

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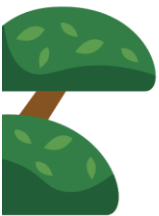
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Appended Resource 1: Ecumenical Prayer Service for the Season of Creation

A Home for All?

In addition to several ecumenical resources, this prayer service is informed by prayers from the tradition of Native American Christians. In this context, the phrase “the people” is a reference to all species, minerals even stars in the heavens. Among these people are the human people, the plant people, the four-legged, flying and swimming peoples, rock people, star people and more. All “people” should find their home in the oikos of God.

As you plan your service, consider pitching “Abraham’s Tent” in the midst of the prayer service as a symbol of the community’s intention to create a home for all. You may also wish to set the space with natural items that represent the land and other “peoples” from the beloved community who call your place “home”.

Leader parts are in regular font, **congregational responses are in bold.**

Welcome

We gather in the name of God, Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer of the Earth and all its creatures!

Praise be to the Holy Trinity! God is sound and life, Creator of the Universe, Source of all life, whom the angels sing; wondrous Light of all mysteries known or unknown to humankind, and life that lives in all. (Hildegard of Bingen, 13th Century)

Greeting

We greet each friend in the name of Jesus,
born of Mary and child of Joseph,
grandchild of Heli, who was the 40th-great-grandchild of David,
child of Jesse,
grandchild of Ruth and Boaz who was, by Rahab then Tamar,
the seventh grandson of Judah, child of Jacob,
child of Rebecca and Isaac,
child of Sarah and Abraham,
descendant of Noah, great-grandchild of Enoch who walked with God,
the 4th-great-grandchild of Eve and Adam, human children of the Earth and the Creator.

And who are you, friend?

We invite you to reflect on your ancestors or the meaning of your name, and share this with your neighbor.

We gather in the name of the one born in Bethlehem, who lived as a refugee in Egypt, and who was raised in Nazareth near the Sea of Galilee that feeds the Jordan River. We welcome you from your home. Where is home for you?

We invite you to reflect on your place of origin and your local ecology, how do you describe your home? And share this with your neighbor.

From the places we call home, we are gathered in the name of God, Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer of each creature and the Earth, that is our common home.

Psalmody

How lovely is your dwelling place,
O Lord of hosts!

The Earth is the Lord's and all that is in it!

My soul longs, indeed it faints
for the courts of the Lord;
my heart and my flesh sing for joy
to the living God.

The Earth is the Lord's and all that is in it!

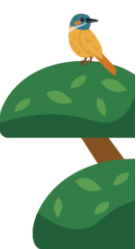
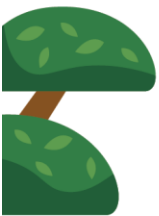
Even the sparrow finds a home,
and the swallow a nest for herself,
where she may lay her young,
at your altars, O Lord of hosts,
Happy are those who live in your house,
ever singing your praise.

The Earth is the Lord's and all that is in it!

As they go through the valley of Baca,
the valley of tears,
they make it a place of springs;
the early rain also covers it with pools.
O Lord of hosts,
happy is everyone who trusts in you.

The Earth is the Lord's and all that is in it!

(adapted from Psalm 84 and 24)



Thanksgiving for the Earth

Creator, the strength of all creatures, we honor you. Listen to the thoughts of your people.

We honour your Spirit who renews the world and calls us to care for your creation to the East, to the South, to the West and to the North.

We live by the ways you have entrusted to us within the circle of life. Come Great Spirit as we gather in your name.

(We turn our bodies to the Four Directions as we pray the following prayers. Begin by turning toward the East and continue to turn, with each prayer, in a clockwise direction)

We face East:

The place of dawning, there is beauty in the morning, there the seeker finds new visions as each sacred day is born. All who honor life around them, all who honor life within, shall shine with light and glory when the morning comes again. And we pray,

Come Holy Spirit, Come

We turn to the South:

In the South, the place of growing, there is wisdom in the earth, Both the painful song of dying and joyful song of birth. As the Earth gives up her lifeblood so that her children's hearts may beat, so we give back to her our reverence for the holy ground beneath our feet. And we pray,

Come Holy Spirit, Come

We turn to the West:

The place of seeing, there is born a vision of the servant of the servants, who proclaimed the Gospel to us. Guide us at the end of each day and fill us with your peace. And we pray,

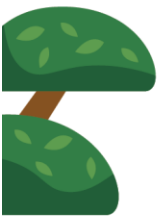
Come Holy Spirit, Come

We turn to the North:

We look to God our Creator who cleanses our earth with snow, wind, and rain. To Jesus who fills us with the wideness of mercy and grace and lovingly embraces all the people. And the Holy Spirit who comes to inspire us. And we pray,

Come Holy Spirit, Come

(adapted from Celebrating Creation: Honoring Indigenous People, Kelly Sherman-Conroy, ELCA)



Song

Sing a hymn that praises God as Creator. If possible, find a hymn that is shared by all participating traditions. Click here for a list of creation-themed hymns.

Lament

“Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruit with coloured flowers and herbs”. With these words, Saint Francis of Assisi reminds us that our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us. This sister now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her...This is why the earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor; she “groans in childbirth” (*Rom 8:22*). And so we confess. (*adapted from Laudato Si'*)

Jesus Christ could not find a place to lay his head. Because of our will to dominate, millions of our human family are displaced from their homes. Many lack access to clean water, sanitation and dignified places for personal hygiene.

Have mercy on us, for the sake of the Earth and all that is in it.

Foxes of the field and birds of the air have a place to call home. Because we misuse the land, the soil, water and air, habitats are desecrated, and millions of species no longer have a home.

Have mercy on us, for the sake of the Earth and all that is in it.

Your promise was to be a blessing for all the peoples of the Earth. But when we exploit the gifts of creation, Indigenous lands are devastated and those who live close to the Earth lose their ways of life.

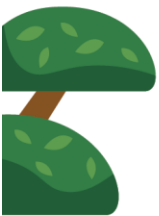
Have mercy on us, for the sake of the Earth and all that is in it.

The mustard seed is great because it provides shelter for many. But we seek security for ourselves, instead of mutual care and faithful hospitality towards our co-creatures.

Have mercy on us, for the sake of the Earth and all that is in it.

Let us remember “that we ourselves are dust of the earth” (cf. Gen 2:7); our very bodies are made of her elements, we breathe her sacred air and we receive life and refreshment from her sacred waters. May we hear it as a promise and a calling.

Turn us O God, from our desire to unroot ourselves from our home in the garden, and from our will to dominate your Earth. Call us again, to till and to keep. Gather us into the power of just relationships that heal and sustain. Enlighten us by your Spirit that renews the face of your Earth and safeguards a home for all. Amen.



Reading of Scripture followed by preaching or participatory reflections

See the thematic readings offered in this resource, or locally designate a text that reflects the particular context of your prayer service. Suggested scriptures are on the Season of Creation website.

Song

Sing a hymn that praises the biodiversity of creation. If possible, find a hymn that is shared by all participating traditions. Click here for a list of creation themed hymns, thanks to Interfaith Power and Light.

Profession of faith

We belong to the Creator in whose image we are all made.

In God we are breathing, in God we are living, in God we share the life of all creation.

We belong to Jesus Christ, the true icon of God and of humanity.

In him God is breathing, in him God is living, through him we are reconciled.

We belong to the Holy Spirit, who gives us new life and strengthens our faith.

In the Spirit love is breathing, in the Spirit truth is living, the breath of God always moves us.

We belong to the Holy Trinity, who is one in all and Three-in-One.

In God we are all made, in Christ we are all saved, in the Spirit we are all united.

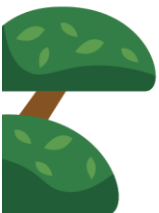
Together, we belong to the Earth, our common home.

The Earth that is the Lord's, and all that is in it.

(Per Harling)

Offering and offertory prayer

You may want to have an offering, perhaps to collect money for a particular project or ministry that contributes to ecological restoration, or an aspect of climate justice, or you may want to showcase local plants, animals from your area as a way to raise awareness of the rest your local habitats need.



Intercessory Prayers

Whenever we join together, we should give thanks. So let us join our hearts and minds together and think of all creation and the Creator's gifts. Loving God.

We give our thanks.

Let us think of our Mother, the Earth, upon whom we walk and who supports us and nurtures life in all its forms. We think of the minerals, the fungi, and bacteria that give life to soil, bodies and systems. We pray we can learn to walk on Earth with more respect. Loving God.

We give our thanks.

Let us think of the reasons why we are gathered. For this place in which we gather, and for all of the animals and plants that call this place home. Loving God.

We give our thanks.

Let us think of the whole human family whose livelihood and well-being depends on the well-being of the Earth. We lift up the men, women and children who are displaced from their homes. Loving God.

We give our thanks.

Let us turn our minds to the sacred waters of the world, the great oceans, aquifers, lakes, rivers and streams, the life that lives in the waters and those that give itself to be our food. Loving God.

We give our thanks.

Let us now turn our thoughts to the plant life of the Creator's world. That which is below ground; the roots and vegetables. That which puts just its head above the ground: the grasses, medicines, plants and bushes. All of the many kinds of good fruit the Creator has given us. And finally, the great trees of the forest that we know of as the "Standing Ones." Loving God.

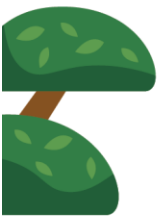
We give our thanks.

Let us think of all our kindred animals, those that crawl, walk, swim and fly. We give thanks for those that provide food for us, those that sustain cycles in their work and living, those that provide companionship and beauty. Loving God.

We give our thanks.

Let us think of the birds of the air. The feathered ones that are the messengers between us and the Creator. Loving God.

We give our thanks.



Let us think of the relationships that sustain life in this beloved community. We think of the “Three Sisters,” corn, beans and squash who nurture, guard and sustain as they grow together (you may insert local examples of plants or animals that live in mutuality). These relationships are gifts from the Creator and our sustenance. Loving God.

We give our thanks.

(Inspired by the Haudenosaunee Thanksgiving Prayer and passed through, among others, Archbishop Mark MacDonald, National Indigenous Anglican Archbishop)

Creator God, look upon the creatures gathered here together and send us where you would have us go, so that we may embody the ministry of justice for your Creation through our being and acts. Walk with us so that we may face the winds of change and walk the good road. Protect and renew our common home. Enlighten us. Sustain us. May God our Creator be with us this day and always. Amen.

(Adapted from Celebrating Creation: Honoring Indigenous People, Kelly Sherman-Conroy, ELCA)

Lord’s Prayer

We pray our common prayer that Christ taught us.

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 echoes 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.

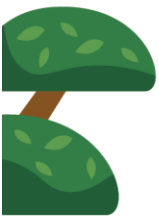
For you reign in the glory of the power that is love, now and forever.

Amen.

(Adapted from The New Zealand Book of Prayer | He Karakia Mihinare o Aotearoa. This version of the Lord’s prayer was influenced by Maori theologians)

Sharing the peace

If we are in Christ, we are becoming a new creation. One Home, One Body.



We see God around us. We see God within us. We give thanks to our Creator.

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.

And also with you.

You are invited to care and share peace with your neighbor, and speak a word of peace to the land in which you gather, and the creatures who share this common home.

(adapted from *Celebrating Creation: Honoring Indigenous People*, Kelly Sherman-Conroy, ELCA)

Benediction

May God who established the dance of creation,
Who marvelled at the lilies of the field,
Who transforms chaos to order,
Lead us to transform our lives and the Church
To reflect God's glory in creation.

(CTBI Eco-Congregation Programme)



Appended Resource 2:

Engage your local ecology through this Earth Examen:

An examen is a way of beholding an object or being in prayerful wonder. Through questions, you are invited to reflect on God's presence and the goodness of that which you behold. During this Season of Creation, consider contemplating a part of your local ecology. This is an exercise that you can choose to do alone, or with a group.

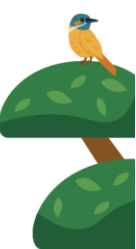
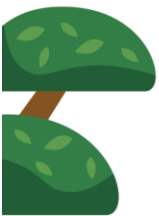
Pick a natural or agricultural place to contemplate. A forest. A river. A city street with a natural area. An urban park. A farmer's field. A hilltop. Find a comfortable place to rest in or near this place. Enter into prayer in whatever way is natural to you. Invite Holy Wisdom to open the eyes of your heart. When you are ready, reflect on the following questions:

1. Become aware of God's presence in a natural or agricultural place that you are contemplating.

How is God present in this place? How does all the life you see exist in God's spirit? How do you feel knowing that the Holy Spirit has filled this place for geological ages, with every plant, animal, organism and mineral that has called this place home in the deep past, makes its home here with you now, and will live here with creatures in this place in the future? How do you feel knowing that you, earthling, belong to this place, are made of the same carbon, breathe the same air, are nurtured by the same cycles and life processes, and are enlivened by the same Spirit of the Creator?

2. Reflect on the ecological cycles of this place with gratitude for all that it provides.

What nutrient cycles are supported by this place? Is this a watershed that filters water? Is this a rainforest (tropical or deciduous) that fixes nutrients? Is this a meadow or field that fixes nitrogen? Is this a green space that absorbs CO₂ and cleans the air? What plants, animals, microbes and minerals are sheltered here? How do they serve the whole earth in their being? For all that this place provides to nurture you and all that belong to this place, let a feeling of gratitude fill you.



3. Pay attention to what you feel as you contemplate the fragility, health of this site.

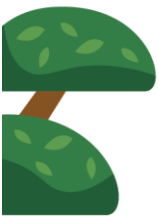
Is this ecosystem healthy? How is this ecosystem at risk of illness? What are the keys to sustaining the equilibrium and balance of this place? What niches and diversity must be protected to maintain the health of this habitat? What are the sources of stress that threaten the balance of this particular ecosystem? Do those stresses drive your co-creatures from their home in this place? How do you feel when you consider the fragility of life that depends on the health of this place? What is your effect on this balance?

4. Choose one feature of the site and pray for it, its rest and its renewal.

When you consider the ways that this place is under stress, what does it need for rest, restoration and renewal? What needs to be conserved for this site to heal itself? What features need to be reclaimed? What parts of creation need to be restored to their rightful home here? Pray for this site, and the wisdom to care for it.

5. Look toward your response. What can you do to ease demands or promote the rest of this ecological site?

Based on your examination, how do you identify with this place? What have you discerned is required to care for this place? What will be your act of compassion to promote rest for this common home?



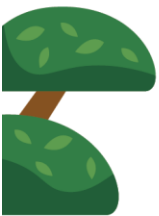
Appended Resource 3:

Event Checklist

This checklist covers the steps to hold a successful event. In summary: plan well, gather wide support, make sure others are aware of the event, and follow-up after it's held.

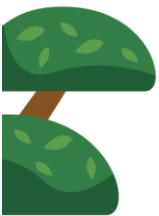
Here is a detailed, step-by-step list to guide your celebration:

- ❑ Gather a group of one to four people to lead with you. This event committee will share the work, develop ideas, working with your pastor/priest and congregation to ensure that the Season of Creation has broad support in your church.
- ❑ Develop a general plan for your event. Refer to the event suggestions, and either choose the one that is right for you or develop another.
- ❑ Schedule a conversation between the pastor/priest, community leaders. To prepare everyone for the meeting, share the letter from faith leaders, information about the Season, and a link to the website in advance. All are available at SeasonOfCreation.org.
- ❑ In the meeting, start by thanking everyone for the good work they already do to protect creation. Say that you and your committee would like to volunteer for the church by leading a Season of Creation event. Get your everyone's feedback, and write notes to record comments.
- ❑ Update your plan in response to the shared comments. Clear the event date, time, and location with your church administrator.
- ❑ Register your event at SeasonOfCreation.org. When you register, your celebration will become visible on the global Season of Creation map. We will also follow up with you by email to provide additional resources.
- ❑ Speak to additional leaders in the church as needed to get feedback and buy-in. The grounds committee, director of religious education, music and worship leader, and parish council might be involved, depending on your event.
- ❑ If your event is ecumenical or interfaith, contact the places of worship with which you hope to collaborate. Request a meeting and present your plan in a way that is similar to the method you used with your own pastor/priest.
- ❑ After the plan is finalized, make sure that members of your congregation and any collaborating places of worship are aware of it. The ideal time to start is one month before the event. This step is essential to ensuring robust attendance and an engaging event. Use the template bulletin announcement, flyer, and social media post available at SeasonOfCreation.org.
- ❑ A few days before the event, gather all supplies. Contact any co-hosts to make sure they have everything they need. Do a final push for awareness in the



church by asking your pastor/priest to make a pulpit announcement for setting up a table in a public space to pass out flyers after services.

- ❑ Host your event. Have fun!
- ❑ After the event, send a thank-you note to all leaders and volunteers. Let your congregation know about any outcomes or next steps from the event.
- ❑ Share photos of your event at SeasonOfCreation.org. These may be shared publicly, and will inspire and educate people around the world.
- ❑ Complete the event report form at SeasonOfCreation.org.



Appended Resource 4: Season of Creation Themed Lectionary Notes

September 5th

Proper 18 / 14th after Trinity

OIKONOME: A JUST HOME FOR ALL PEOPLE

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

¹ A good name is more desirable than great riches;
to be esteemed is better than silver or gold.

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

⁸ Whoever sows injustice reaps calamity,
and the rod they wield in fury will be broken.

⁹ The generous will themselves be blessed,
for they share their food with the poor.

²² Do not exploit the poor because they are poor
and do not crush the needy in court,
²³ for the LORD will take up their case
and will exact life for life.

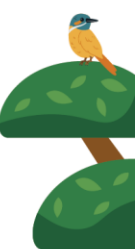
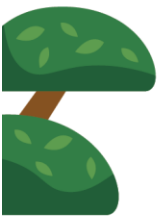
Psalm 125

¹ Those who trust in the LORD are like Mount Zion,
which cannot be shaken but endures for ever.

² As the mountains surround Jerusalem,
so the LORD surrounds his people
both now and for evermore.

³ The sceptre of the wicked will not remain
over the land allotted to the righteous,
for then the righteous might use
their hands to do evil.

⁴ LORD, do good to those who are good,
to those who are upright in heart.



⁵ But those who turn to crooked ways
the LORD will banish with the evildoers.

Peace be on Israel.

James 2:1-10, 14-17

¹ My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favouritism. ² Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in filthy old clothes also comes in. ³ If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, 'Here's a good seat for you,' but say to the poor man, 'You stand there' or 'Sit on the floor by my feet,' ⁴ have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? ⁵ Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? ⁶ But you have dishonoured the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? ⁷ Are they not the ones who are blaspheming the noble name of him to whom you belong? ⁸ If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, 'Love your neighbour as yourself,' you are doing right. ⁹ But if you show favouritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as law-breakers. ¹⁰ For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.

¹⁴ What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? ¹⁵ Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. ¹⁶ 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? ¹⁷ In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

Mark 7:24-end

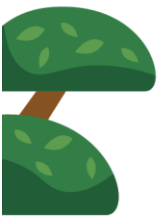
²⁴ Jesus left that place and went to the vicinity of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know it; yet he could not keep his presence secret. ²⁵ In fact, as soon as she heard about him, a woman whose little daughter was possessed by an impure spirit came and fell at his feet. ²⁶ The woman was a Greek, born in Syrian Phoenicia. She begged Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter.

²⁷ 'First let the children eat all they want,' he told her, 'for it is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs.'

²⁸ 'Lord,' she replied, 'even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs.'

²⁹ Then he told her, 'For such a reply, you may go; the demon has left your daughter.'

³⁰ She went home and found her child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.



³¹ Then Jesus left the vicinity of Tyre and went through Sidon, down to the Sea of Galilee and into the region of the Decapolis ³² There some people brought to him a man who was deaf and could hardly talk, and they begged Jesus to place his hand on him.

³³ After he took him aside, away from the crowd, Jesus put his fingers into the man's ears. Then he spat and touched the man's tongue. ³⁴ He looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh said to him, '*Ephphatha!*' (which means 'Be opened!'). ³⁵ At this, the man's ears were opened, his tongue was loosed and he began to speak plainly. ³⁶ Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone. But the more he did so, the more they kept talking about it. ³⁷ People were overwhelmed with amazement. 'He has done everything well,' they said. 'He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.'

NOTES:

- Oikos, the Greek word for 'home', is the root word for 'economy' – which, at a global level, is about planetary house-keeping. How far have modern understandings of the importance of the economy drifted from the root meaning of creating a secure and just home for all?
- Proverbs 22 and James 2 make clear that God will champion the cause of the oppressed, and that poverty and injustice are deeply linked to our economic behaviour and systems.
- 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, what is the 'good news' (the Gospel)? Can there be good news without addressing such injustice?
- James 2:6 "Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court?" Is this passage aimed only at the 'super rich' or also at the many Christians who live comfortable lives, acting as if they (we?) are ignorant of the links between that comfort – built on exploitative and unsustainable economic practices - and the suffering of the poor?
- In Mark 7:28-29, Jesus commends the Syro-Phoenician (a woman and a Gentile) for arguing with him, and heals her daughter! Are there issues of injustice, where God seems silent, that drive us to wrestle with God in prayer?

September 12th

Proper 19 / 15th after Trinity

OIKOLOGIE: WISDOM FROM OUR HOME PLANET

Proverbs 1:20-33

²⁰ Out in the open wisdom calls aloud,
she raises her voice in the public square;

²¹ on top of the wall she cries out,
at the city gate she makes her speech:

²² 'How long will you who are simple love your simple ways?
How long will mockers delight in mockery
and fools hate knowledge?

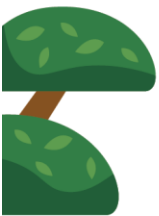
²³ Repent at my rebuke!
Then I will pour out my thoughts to you,
I will make known to you my teachings.

²⁴ But since you refuse to listen when I call
and no one pays attention when I stretch out my hand,
²⁵ since you disregard all my advice
and do not accept my rebuke,
²⁶ I in turn will laugh when disaster strikes you;
I will mock when calamity overtakes you –
²⁷ when calamity overtakes you like a storm,
when disaster sweeps over you like a whirlwind,
when distress and trouble overwhelm you.

²⁸ 'Then they will call to me but I will not answer;
they will look for me but will not find me,
²⁹ since they hated knowledge
and did not choose to fear the LORD.
³⁰ Since they would not accept my advice
and spurned my rebuke,
³¹ they will eat the fruit of their ways
and be filled with the fruit of their schemes.
³² For the waywardness of the simple will kill them,
and the complacency of fools will destroy them;
³³ but whoever listens to me will live in safety
and be at ease, without fear of harm.'

Psalm 19

¹ The heavens declare the glory of God;
the skies proclaim the work of his hands.
² Day after day they pour forth speech;
night after night they reveal knowledge.
³ They have no speech, they use no words;
no sound is heard from them.
⁴ Yet their voice goes out into all the earth,
their words to the ends of the world.



In the heavens God has pitched a tent for the sun.

⁵ It is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber,
like a champion rejoicing to run his course.

⁶ It rises at one end of the heavens
and makes its circuit to the other;
nothing is deprived of its warmth.

⁷ The law of the LORD is perfect,
refreshing the soul.

The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy,
making wise the simple.

⁸ The precepts of the LORD are right,
giving joy to the heart.

The commands of the LORD are radiant,
giving light to the eyes.

⁹ The fear of the LORD is pure,
enduring for ever.

The decrees of the LORD are firm,
and all of them are righteous.

¹⁰ They are more precious than gold,
than much pure gold;
they are sweeter than honey,
than honey from the honeycomb.

¹¹ By them your servant is warned;
in keeping them there is great reward.

¹² But who can discern their own errors?
Forgive my hidden faults.

¹³ Keep your servant also from wilful sins;
may they not rule over me.

Then I will be blameless,
innocent of great transgression.

¹⁴ May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart
be pleasing in your sight,
LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.

James 3:1-12

¹ Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. ² We all stumble in many ways. Anyone who is never at fault in what they say is perfect, able to keep their whole body in check.

³ When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. ⁴ Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. ⁵ Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. ⁶ The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. ⁷ All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and sea creatures are being tamed and have been tamed by mankind, ⁸ but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. ⁹ With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness. ¹⁰ Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be. ¹¹ Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? ¹² My brothers and sisters, can a fig-tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.

Mark 8:27-end

²⁷ Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, 'Who do people say I am?' ²⁸ They replied, 'Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.' ²⁹ 'But what about you?' he asked. 'Who do you say I am?' Peter answered, 'You are the Messiah.'

³⁰ Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him.

³¹ He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. ³² He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ³³ But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. 'Get behind me, Satan!' he said. 'You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.' ³⁴ Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ³⁵ For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. ³⁶ What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? ³⁷ Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? ³⁸ If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels.'

NOTES:

- 'Oikos' is also the root word for 'ecology', the science of relationships of organisms (including us) to each other and their surroundings.

- In Proverbs, Wisdom is personified as a woman, present at and involved in creation (8:22-31). Theologians differ as to whether Wisdom is simply a literary device, or represents the Holy Spirit, or possibly even the pre-incarnate Christ.
- Whichever view we take, Wisdom is clearly from God, and accessed both through study of nature / God's world (eg. 1 Kings 4:29-33) and of scripture / God's word. Psalm 19 beautifully outlines God's 'two books': nature (vs.1-6) and scripture (vs.7-11). How can we ensure we gain wisdom by studying both of these means of God's self-revelation?
- How do Proverbs 1:26-30, about how disaster (often ecological) will overtake those who ignore God's Wisdom, speak to our situation today? Are there examples in your context?
- In James 3:7-12 vivid imagery contrasts the untameable human tongue with other aspects of nature. Is there a sense in which humanity's increasing separation from nature leads to us speaking and behaving in more unnatural, and harmful, ways?
- In Mark 8:34-35 Jesus asks his followers to take up their cross and follow him. How can we 'take up our cross' and follow Christ as Lord of creation in an era of ecological trauma? Why not share stories of environmental campaigners, eg in Latin America, who have lost their lives in challenging powerful vested interests that are destroying God's world.
- In Mark 8:36-37 Jesus asks what good it is to gain the whole world but forfeit our souls. Is this verse calling us to focus only on the 'spiritual' gospel, or is it rather a challenge to the materialism that hardens our hearts against God, and against true Wisdom?

September 19th

Proper 20 /16th after Trinity

PEACEMAKING AS HOME-BUILDING

Proverbs 31:10-end

¹⁰ A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies.

¹¹ Her husband has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value.

¹² She brings him good, not harm, all the days of her life.

¹³ She selects wool and flax and works with eager hands.

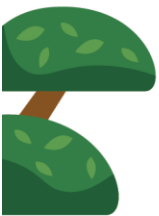
¹⁴ She is like the merchant ships, bringing her food from afar.

¹⁵ She gets up while it is still night; she provides food for her family and portions for her female servants.

¹⁶ She considers a field and buys it; out of her earnings she plants a vineyard.

¹⁷ She sets about her work vigorously; her arms are strong for her tasks.

¹⁸ She sees that her trading is profitable, and her lamp does not go out at night.



- ¹⁹ In her hand she holds the distaff and grasps the spindle with her fingers.
²⁰ She opens her arms to the poor and extends her hands to the needy.
²¹ When it snows, she has no fear for her household; for all of them are clothed in scarlet.
²² She makes coverings for her bed; she is clothed in fine linen and purple.
²³ Her husband is respected at the city gate, where he takes his seat among the elders of the land.
²⁴ She makes linen garments and sells them, and supplies the merchants with sashes.
²⁵ She is clothed with strength and dignity; she can laugh at the days to come.
²⁶ She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue.
²⁷ She watches over the affairs of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness.
²⁸ Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her:
²⁹ 'Many women do noble things, but you surpass them all.'
³⁰ Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.
³¹ Honour her for all that her hands have done, and let her works bring her praise at the city gate.

Psalm 1

- ¹ Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked
or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers,
² but whose delight is in the law of the LORD,
and who meditates on his law day and night.
³ That person is like a tree planted by streams of water,
which yields its fruit in season
and whose leaf does not wither – whatever they do prospers.
⁴ Not so the wicked!
They are like chaff that the wind blows away.
⁵ Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.
⁶ For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.

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

- ¹³ Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. ¹⁴ But if you harbour bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. ¹⁵ Such 'wisdom' does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. ¹⁶ For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil

practice. ¹⁷ 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. ¹⁸ Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.

4:1 What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? ² You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. ³ When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

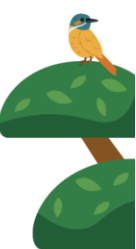
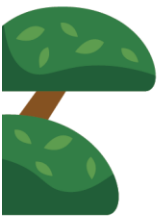
⁷ Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸ Come near to God and he will come near to you.

Mark 9:30-37

³⁰ They left that place and passed through Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone to know where they were, ³¹ because he was teaching his disciples. He said to them, 'The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise.' ³² But they did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it. ³³ They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he asked them, 'What were you arguing about on the road?' ³⁴ But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest. ³⁵ Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, 'Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all.' ³⁶ He took a little child whom he placed among them. Taking the child in his arms, he said to them, ³⁷ 'Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me.'

NOTES:

- 'Peace' is at the heart of the Christian gospel. We live in a fractured world, where relationships between people, nature and God are deeply broken. In Christ, God comes to bring 'peace', not only spiritually through the forgiveness of sins, but to restore all these damaged and broken relationships.
- The Hebrew concept of 'Shalom', often translated as 'peace', reflects restored relationships in every dimension: with God, self, neighbours near and far, and with the earth and its creatures. It is an integrated vision of 'the good life' that combines faith, justice, and peacebuilding – as summarised by the idealised wife of Proverbs 31. Note how she ensures everyone and everything can flourish: her family, the poor, the land, the economy! This is a lovely example of being a peacemaker / home-builder / shalom-spreader in very practical local terms!
- Building on last week's theme of 'Wisdom', James 3:17-18 states, "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.” Jesus said ‘Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God’ (Matthew 5:9). The phrase ‘children of God’ is often applied to those who believe in Christ – the church. How can we, as the Christian community, be peacemakers both globally and locally, particularly in a context of inequality and unsustainable lifestyle choices?

- In today’s Gospel reading, in Mark 9:36-37, 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. How can we welcome the Father, by listening more effectively to the voices of young people and changing our attitudes and behaviour in response?

September 26th

Proper 21 / 17th after Trinity

PRAYING FOR OUR HOME PLANET & ITS PEOPLE

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

¹ So the king and Haman went to Queen Esther’s banquet, ² and as they were drinking wine on the second day, the king again asked, ‘Queen Esther, what is your petition? It will be given you. What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be granted.’

³ Then Queen Esther answered, ‘If I have found favour with you, Your Majesty, and if it pleases you, grant me my life – this is my petition. And spare my people – this is my request. ⁴ For I and my people have been sold to be destroyed, killed and annihilated. If we had merely been sold as male and female slaves, I would have kept quiet, because no such distress would justify disturbing the king.’

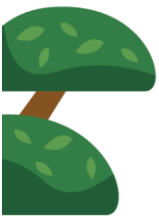
⁵ King Xerxes asked Queen Esther, ‘Who is he? Where is he – the man who has dared to do such a thing?’

⁶ Esther said, ‘An adversary and enemy! This vile Haman!’

Then Haman was terrified before the king and queen.

⁹ Then Harbona, one of the eunuchs attending the king, said, ‘A pole reaching to a height of fifty cubits stands by Haman’s house. He had it set up for Mordecai, who spoke up to help the king.’ The king said, ‘Impale him on it!’ ¹⁰ So they impaled Haman on the pole he had set up for Mordecai. Then the king’s fury subsided.

9:20 Mordecai recorded these events, and he sent letters to all the Jews throughout the provinces of King Xerxes, near and far, ²¹ that they should celebrate annually the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month of Adar ²² as the time when the Jews got relief from their enemies, and as the month when their sorrow was turned into joy and



their mourning into a day of celebration. He wrote to them to observe the days as days of feasting and joy and giving presents of food to one another and gifts to the poor.

Psalm 124

- ¹ If the LORD had not been on our side – let Israel say –
² if the LORD had not been on our side when people attacked us,
³ they would have swallowed us alive when their anger flared against us;
⁴ the flood would have engulfed us, the torrent would have swept over us,
⁵ the raging waters would have swept us away.
- ⁶ Praise be to the LORD, who has not let us be torn by their teeth.
⁷ We have escaped like a bird from the fowler's snare;
the snare has been broken, and we have escaped.
⁸ Our help is in the name of the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.

James 5:13-end

- ¹³ Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. ¹⁴ Is anyone among you ill? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵ And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. ¹⁶ Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.
- ¹⁷ Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. ¹⁸ Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.
- ¹⁹ My brothers and sisters, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring that person back, ²⁰ remember this: whoever turns a sinner from the error of their way will save them from death and cover over a multitude of sins.

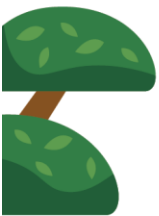
Mark 9:38-end

- ³⁸ 'Teacher,' said John, 'we saw someone driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us.'
- ³⁹ 'Do not stop him,' Jesus said. 'For no one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me, ⁴⁰ for whoever is not against us is for us. ⁴¹ Truly I tell you, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to the Messiah will certainly not lose their reward.
- ⁴² '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 round their neck and they were

thrown into the sea. ⁴³ If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out. ⁴⁵ And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. ⁴⁷ And if your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, ⁴⁸ where “the worms that eat them do not die, and the fire is not quenched.” ⁴⁹ Everyone will be salted with fire. ⁵⁰ ‘Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again? Have salt among yourselves, and be at peace with each other.’

NOTES:

- There is a danger that responses to climate injustice and environmental chaos are 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.
- James 5:13 states: “Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray.” The passage continues, “The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective” (5:16b) and gives the example of Elijah praying for no rain and then praying for rain which led to fruitful harvests (5:17-18). Do we pray about the Climate crisis? Do we pray for God’s mercy for people and places suffering devastating and catastrophic drought or flood, storms or erosion? Do we 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 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?
- Mark 9:42ff uses strong language to warn of the danger of causing children and young people to stumble. 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 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.



October 3rd

Proper 22 / 18th after Trinity

A HOME AND A HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

Job 1:1; 2:1-10

1:1 In the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job. This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil.

2:1 On another day the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them to present himself before him. ² And the LORD said to Satan, 'Where have you come from?' Satan answered the LORD, 'From roaming throughout the earth, going to and fro on it.' ³ Then the LORD said to Satan, 'Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil. And he still maintains his integrity, though you incited me against him to ruin him without any reason.' ⁴ 'Skin for skin!' Satan replied. 'A man will give all he has for his own life. ⁵ But now stretch out your hand and strike his flesh and bones, and he will surely curse you to your face.' ⁶ The LORD said to Satan, 'Very well, then, he is in your hands; but you must spare his life.' ⁷ So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD and afflicted Job with painful sores from the soles of his feet to the crown of his head. ⁸ Then Job took a piece of broken pottery and scraped himself with it as he sat among the ashes. ⁹ His wife said to him, 'Are you still maintaining your integrity? Curse God and die!' ¹⁰ He replied, 'You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?' In all this, Job did not sin in what he said.

Psalm 26

¹ Vindicate me, LORD, for I have led a blameless life;
I have trusted in the LORD and have not faltered.

² Test me, LORD, and try me, examine my heart and my mind;
³ for I have always been mindful of your unfailing love
and have lived in reliance on your faithfulness.

⁴ I do not sit with the deceitful, nor do I associate with hypocrites.

⁵ I abhor the assembly of evildoers and refuse to sit with the wicked.

⁶ I wash my hands in innocence, and go about your altar, LORD,

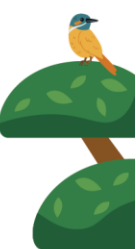
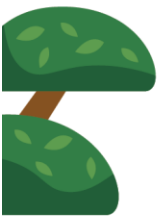
⁷ proclaiming aloud your praise and telling of all your wonderful deeds.

⁸ LORD, I love the house where you live, the place where your glory dwells.

⁹ Do not take away my soul along with sinners, my life with those who are bloodthirsty,

¹⁰ in whose hands are wicked schemes, whose right hands are full of bribes.

¹¹ I lead a blameless life; deliver me and be merciful to me.



¹² My feet stand on level ground; in the great congregation I will praise the LORD.

Hebrews 1:1-4; 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. ³ The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. ⁴ So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs.

2:5 It is not to angels that he has subjected the world to come, about which we are speaking. ⁶ But there is a place where someone has testified:

'What is mankind that you are mindful of them,
a son of man that you care for him?

⁷ You made them a little lower than the angels;
you crowned them with glory and honour

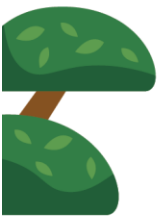
⁸ and put everything under their feet.'

In putting everything under them, God left nothing that is not subject to them. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to them. ⁹ But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honour because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. ¹⁰ In bringing many sons and daughters to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through what he suffered. ¹¹ Both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters. ¹² He says,

'I will declare your name to my brothers and sisters;
in the assembly I will sing your praises.'

Mark 10:2-16

² Some Pharisees came and tested him by asking, 'Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?' ³ 'What did Moses command you?' he replied. ⁴ They said, 'Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away.' ⁵ 'It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law,' Jesus replied. ⁶ 'But at the beginning of creation God "made them male and female". ⁷ "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, ⁸ and the two will become one flesh." So they are no longer two, but one flesh. ⁹ Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.' ¹⁰ When they were in the house again, the disciples asked Jesus about



this. ¹¹ He answered, 'Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. ¹² And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery.'

¹³ People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them. ¹⁴ When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the beloved community of God belongs to such as these. ¹⁵ Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the beloved community of God like a little child will never enter it.' ¹⁶ And he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them.

NOTES:

- For the third consecutive week, the Gospel speaks of the place of children in God's kingdom. In Mark 10:14-15 Jesus blesses children and states, '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.' Today's children will inherit an impoverished and unstable world due to our failures to address climate and ecological breakdown. Many suffer from deep anxiety and despair. Yet, God's kingdom belongs to 'such as these'. How can we both learn from today's children and young people, and also become like them in trust and in seeing clearly?
- Hope is the key to living through despair. Jesus' teaching on the Kingdom of God speaks of a future hope that is guaranteed and certain. Even if today we see only glimpses and signs of hope amidst so much suffering, we can still live in the light of our prayer 'Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven'. One day, God's kingdom will come in all its glorious fulness. That does not mean we passively wait. Rather it gives us the motivation to live today in the light of that future truth.
- Hebrews 1:1-4 & 2:5-12 speak of Jesus as Lord of all creation. He is the one 'through whom' God made the universe (1:2), and who sustains all things 'by his powerful word' (1:3). He is 'heir of all things (1:2). 'now crowned with glory and honour (2:9) because of his saving death and suffering. We can have hope for the future of all creation, because Christ who died is now raised and reigns in glory. He is the one 'for whom and through whom everything exists' (2:10).
- In some mysterious way, Hebrews 2 also suggests that we as believers, are caught up with Christ in his glory, made holy, and 'crowned with glory and honour', with all things placed under our feet (2:7-8, quoting Psalm 8). Back in Genesis 1, humans were made in God's image and commissioned to reflect God's loving purposes in leadership within creation. We have repeatedly failed, but here, as in Romans 8:19 which states 'the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed', it seems the Church (God's 'sons and daughters') is once

again given leadership within the community of creation. This is both a deep and humbling mystery, and a great privilege and responsibility.

