

starters for Sunday

Starters for Sunday, September 30th 2012

Creation Time Resources Day Five

Bursting with Life

Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock... And there was evening, and there was morning —the sixth day. ~ *The Book of Genesis*

[Genesis 1: 1 – 23](#)

[Numbers 20: 1 – 13](#)

[Psalm 42](#)

[St. John 4: 1 – 42](#)



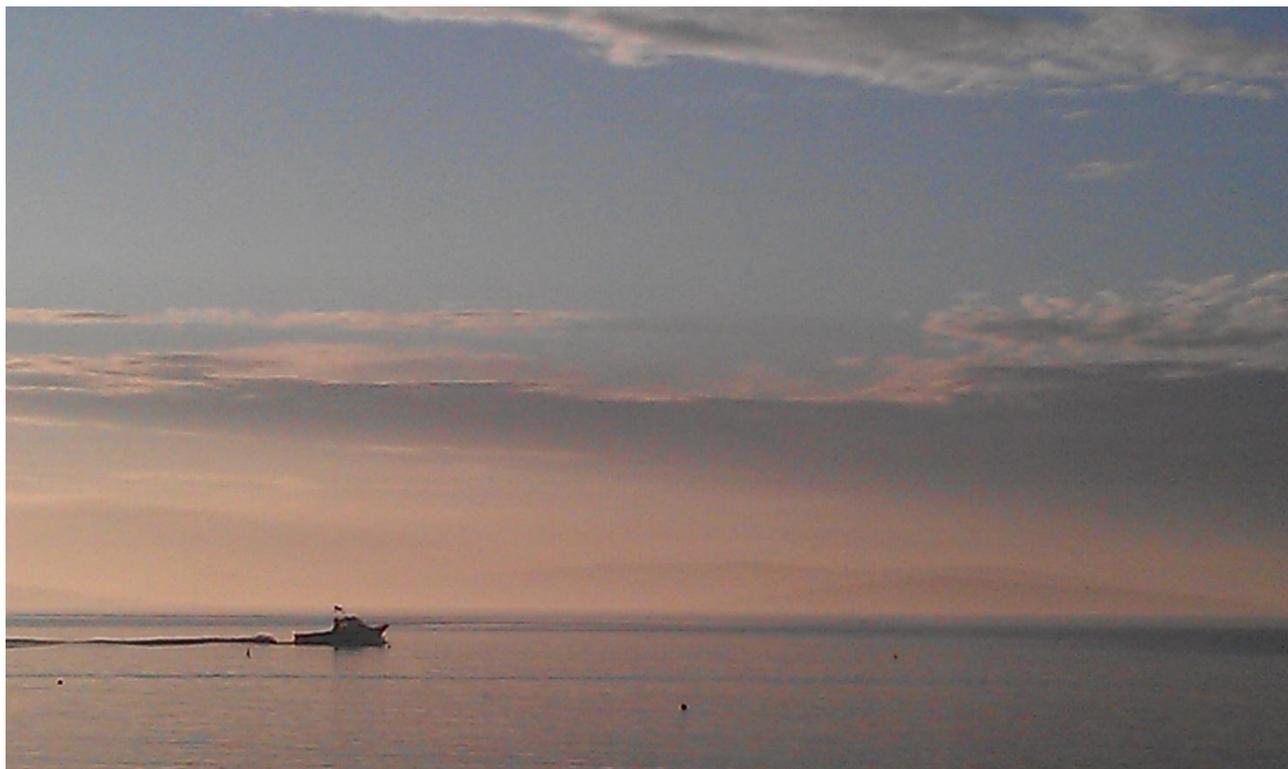
The Church of Scotland

Mission and Discipleship Council

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Introduction to Theme

We are spoilt for water in Scotland, surrounded by seas that have been a source of wealth and riches and washed by rains that are, in the words of an eighteenth century visitor to Argyll 'prodigious'. The seas surrounding Scotland have given us fish and oil, yet our stewardship of both has been poor, if not woeful as we have plundered both. The reserves of North Sea oil have been exploited within the span of one human life and will not return in human time. Fish stocks are much depleted but could return with careful management. How do we promote good stewardship of the seas in an age of rampant exploitation?



Our wet climate may yet turn out to be one of our greatest riches. When other parts of the world face drought induced by climate change the future of Scotland's rainfall seems secure. The water pouring off the hills gives us the opportunity to make electricity in small scale hydroelectric schemes, a low carbon alternative to using coal or gas to generate electricity.



Introduction to Passages

We live in a country blessed (even if at times it can feel like a curse!) with abundant water. Water from below and water from above – virtually the only time we feel its absence is when the mechanical side of delivering it breaks down.

But we are increasingly aware of the havoc and tragedy that the lack of it can create in other parts of the world. A friend of ours was attending a wedding once in a drought-stricken part of Africa. At the feast, she noticed a group of women sitting apart, looking sad. She went to speak to them – and heard their story. They lived in a village where there was no well – and had to make a round trip of some ten miles each day to fetch water for their families. A few days before, one of their friends, who had been ill, set out to walk to the well. When she got there, as she was pulling the bucket up with water in it, she took a dizzy turn, fell in, and was drowned. Small wonder they were sad.

Many aid agencies, such as Wateraid (www.wateraid.org), work hard to provide wells in similar villages throughout the developing world. But ensuring the fair and sustainable provision of water for everyone is far more than a matter of charity. It is also a matter of justice. In Israel-Palestine, for example, the sharing of water resources is hugely controversial – in some areas, the illegal Israeli settlements quite deliberately divert to themselves much of the water that used to irrigate the olive fields of their Palestinian neighbours – who sometimes only have water for a few hours each day. During the first Gulf War, when Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait, there were those who argued that diverting the flow of water from the huge rivers of the region could have stopped the war in a matter of days. Similar arguments are put forward to suggest that, rather than the control of oil, it may well be the control of water that could trigger another major conflict in the Middle East.

The various writers and compilers of the Bible narratives had a variety of views about water, ranging from a deep appreciation of its centrality to all life in Genesis, to a vision of God's new heaven and new earth in Revelation, where “the sea was no more.”

Here are some passages that might spark off some thoughts.



Genesis 1: 1 – 23

This primitive creation narrative, like others from the same part of the world, recognises the fundamental truth well-attested by science – namely that life on earth begins in water. The very first verses of the story picture the beginning of creation taking place within and around water – there are eight references to “the waters” in the first ten verses of the Bible! So when the story moves into “the fifth day”, there are the waters all ready to “bring forth swarms of living creatures” - which of course is exactly how it happened, albeit over a very much longer period of time.

Today, the pollution of the oceans increasingly exercises our minds. We still need “the waters” as the source of sustainable life on earth – yet we go on using them as a dump for our refuse, killing species and making them ever less clean. And this is to say nothing of the very real dangers to life on earth as global warming threatens to alter the level of the sea across the world, endangering the very continued existence of human communities on some low lying islands in the Pacific.

To honour the priority the Bible gives to water would seem, therefore, to be both to be faithful to its witness and at the same time to be an urgent necessity for the continuation of life on earth as we know it – for us today, and for succeeding generations.

Numbers 20: 1 – 13

Throughout the story of the wanderings of the early Israelites, as they move from slavery in Egypt to freedom in Palestine, complaining and moaning run as constant themes. They complain about lack of food – so God sends manna. They complain about lack of meat, so God sends them quails. Now here, they complain about lack of water – so God sends them water from a rock.

I find it interesting that in this story in Numbers, the place where God gives them water is called Meribah – a word which we are told means “Quarrel”. In this story, the quarrel referred to is the quarrel that the Israelites had with God; but how often, to this day, is water at the heart of the quarrels that we humans have with one another! I've already mentioned how quarrels over water erupt constantly in that very same land where these early Israelites were heading all these centuries ago. The controlling of water, in for instance Bangladesh and Pakistan, continually challenges communities and governments in that part of the world; and how many more devastating tsunamis will we have to have before authorities in parts of the world threatened by earthquakes recognise the need for effective early-warning systems and appropriate relocation of villages?



As with food, so with water – there is enough of it for everyone, but we need to care for it, and ever seek to find ways both to control it effectively and to share it justly; else we will go on complaining and quarrelling about it for generations to come.

Psalm 42

This well-loved Psalm evokes feelings in connection with water with which I suspect many of us can identify.

It likens the longing of the human soul for God to a deer thirsting for flowing streams. Anyone who has taken part in a race or a climb, or even just a hill-walk, will know what it feels like to long for water; anyone who seriously continues in the search for the mystery we call God will know too the thirsting after that personal encounter of which the Psalmist writes.

The Psalmist speaks later on of God's waves and billows crashing over his head; swimmers in the ocean will know the feeling; and searchers after God will remember too the times when the search feels overwhelming, taking one's breath away.

Yet running right through this lovely Psalm is the theme of God's faithfulness, and the constant call to “hope in God”; and I think of the many times that I have been brought to a deeper peace in my searching, as I have walked beside the still waters – where God has indeed, in the words of that other much-loved Psalm, “restored my soul”.

So we can give thanks to God that water is not only essential for life on earth, and a constant call upon us to care for it and to justly share it; water is also a powerful image to support, stimulate and encourage us, as we continue on our search for the living God.



St. John 4: 1 – 42

Here, in the well-known story of Jesus in conversation with the Woman of Samaria at Jacob's well, we are offered that other, prior, aspect of water in relation to us and God – water as an image of God's search for us.

It begins, of course, with the water of baptism – such a powerful image of the cleansing and enlivening Spirit of God entering our lives.

Here, it continues with the evangelist pointing us to the way in which the person of Jesus is the continuing source of life in all its fullness – as the One who alone offers us the living water, “a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.”

I like to relate the image of water in this story, to the first verses of St. John's Gospel, where the writer speaks of Jesus as the One who “was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being.” Here, we are invited to picture Jesus as one with God in creation – bringing into being, as we saw earlier, the very waters from which all life on earth emerged. So in Jesus, we are called to recognise both the co-creator of the material water of life, and also the One who, through his faithful living and dying, God raises up as the giver of the water of life eternal.

Thanks be to God!

These materials are designed to be a starting point for what you might preach this Sunday. If you would be interested in looking at our free materials on how you might preach, please click [here](#) to see our [Preachers Perspectives](#) web page where we have asked twelve preachers to share the insights they have gathered through their experiences of writing and delivering sermons regularly.



Prayer, Poems and Responses

Grant, O merciful God,
That your Church,
Being gathered by your Holy Spirit into one,
May show forth your power among all peoples,
To the glory of your name;
Through Jesus Christ our Lord,
Who lives and reigns
With you and the Holy Spirit
One God, now and forever.

A Prayer – from the World Church.

O God,
open to us today
the sea of your mercy
and water us with full streams
from the riches of your grace
and the springs of your kindness.
Make us children of quietness and heirs of peace:
kindle in us the fire of your love:
strengthen our weakness by your power
and bind us close to you and to each other.
We pray in Jesus' name,
Amen.



A prayer to be said at sea

O MOST powerful and glorious Lord God, at whose command the winds blow, and lift up the waves of the sea, and who stillest the rage thereof;

We, thy creatures, but miserable sinners, do in this our great distress cry unto thee for help; Save, Lord, or else we perish. We confess, when we have been safe, and seen all things quiet about us, we have forgotten thee our God, and refused to hearken to the still voice of thy word, and to obey thy commandments:

But now we see how terrible thou art in all thy works of wonder; the great God to be feared above all:

And therefore we adore thy Divine Majesty, acknowledging thy power, and imploring thy goodness.

Help, Lord, and save us for thy mercy's sake, in Jesus Christ, thy Son our Lord. Amen.

From the 1789 US Book of Common Prayer

A PRAYER FOR WATER

Loving God,

whose son Jesus Christ

called all who were thirsty

to come to him, believe and drink,

Look in mercy

on your people living in dry lands, and

struggling to survive without access to safe drinking water.

Forgive our selfishness in life and our misuse of

our natural resources.

We commit ourselves to value and care for your gifts to us.



May rivers of living water
and practical compassion for all who
suffer flow out from our hearts.
Refreshed by your Spirit,
and following in the way of Jesus Christ,
We will continue to serve you
in the people and creation entrusted to our care.

Amen

(Adapted from a prayer by Rev Canon Paul Robertson 2004)

caritas.org.au

All kinds of creatures that live in the waters by Ruth Burgess

God created the great sea monsters,
all kinds of creatures that live in the waters...
God made everything in the seas and waters
and saw that it was good. (Genesis 1)

codfish

dogfish

garfish

guppy

hogfish

icefish

lubfish



tunny

oarfish

sunfish

swordfish

trevally

rosefish

tigerfish

roundfish

blenny

and.....

sand shark

sea squirt

stone crab

urchin

dragonfish

razor clam

wentletrap

whiting

mummichog



sting ray

twaite shad

sewin

water flea

hermit crab

flying suid

alevin

and....

elephant seal

millers thumb

robber crab

laker

prickleback

rabbit fish

barra mundi

nerka

rough hound

candlefish

fish louse

tetra



lumpfish

ghost crab

bonnet head

conger

and.....

bony pike

sardine

mudfish

limpet

devilfish

angelfish

sea wolf

ablet

stickleback

shovel head

scrag whale

starlet

goldfish

pomfret

electric ray

mullet



and....

God created the great sea monsters,

all kinds of creatures that live in the waters...

Yes , God made everything in the seas and waters

and saw that it was good. (Genesis 1)

By Ruth Burgess



Creation Time Prayer

This model is based on 'Appreciative Inquiry' and offers time for silent reflection on the theme of each of the seven days. It allows the worship leader to support the congregation through a more reflective and quiet time of prayer, best placed after the sermon. This structure below gives the main stages to go through, in as unhurried a fashion as possible.

The hope of this form of prayer is that we connect with what sustains and draws us towards that which is good, rather than dwelling upon and being paralysed by the things that weigh on us or feel beyond our capacity to change.

[1] Decide the theme of your prayer, for example

- being aware of the sources of our energy
- being concerned about our use of water
- the times when we thought about food and how we use it

[2] Settling and beginning the Prayer

Do this in a way that is familiar to your congregation, spend time addressing God and naming the theme of the prayer. The language below may seem unusual, but acts as a prompt for people to pray, rather than a script for leading the prayer. It can of course be adapted to suit.

In prayer recalling when

- I consciously thought of how I was using energy
- how that energy was created
- how those thoughts moved me to action

Silent reflection

[3] In prayer remembering how I felt when I made an effort to conserve energy

Silent reflection

[4] In prayer imagining how I would feel if I made another effort to conserve energy

Silent reflection

[5] In prayer making the commitment, promising God, that I will act

Silent reflection and ending the prayer, entrusting our lives into God care and love.



Time with Children

Prepare three gifts and think how you might talk about them, share them or get people to interact with them.

1. a large container of water (preferably salt water from the sea or water from a river) Write the date on it, also write “Day 5 of Creation, to everyone, with love, God”
2. gifts randomly, including
 - one very large bottled water (give that to yourself)
 - one small bottle with tap water in it
 - lots of empty containers, some dirty ones
 (you could wrap these up and give them to children or adults randomly to open)
3. message in a bottle (if possible sneak it into the first large container)

These symbolise three types of water and how they are given to us

1. God’s gift of water to creation - where life starts (here you could use the piece about all the different creature in the sea by Ruth Burgess) - gifted to all creation - essentially the gift of life
2. How people of the world share water with each other - not fairly, but selfishly - even though there is enough water to go round
3. Jesus’s promise of “living water” - an invitation - where a new life starts -

A good song to follow this to listen (or dance) to would be “Share The Well”

There is an “energizer” from America that accompanies this:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xaz4nh9kZsg>



Music Suggestions

These suggestions could work for any of the seven days of these Creation Time resources. Suggestions specific to each day are also found below.

Songs for use throughout Creation Time

Called by earth and sky (printed here with permission)



Called by Earth and Sky page 1 PDF.pdf



Called by Earth and Sky page 2 PDF.pdf

We Walk his Way

[Wild Goose Resource Group](#)

Know that God is good

CH4 788

The peace of the earth

CH4 798

God's love is for everybody

CH4 765

Mayenziwe - Your will be done on earth, O Lord

CH4 805

Lord your hands have formed this world

CH4 140

Here I am Lord

CH4 251

Enemy of Apathy

CH4 593

God's will for creation

CH4 136

Heaven shall not wait

CH4 362

Let all creation dance (alt. tune 60)

CH4 149



Music to listen to or play during quiet prayer

Karine Polwart “River’s Run” (album “This Earthly Spell; genre folk)

iTunes: <http://itunes.apple.com/gb/album/rivers-run/id350893515?i=350893571>

You Tube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iJW71rMVQyE>

Lyrics: <http://www.lyricstime.com/karine-polwart-rivers-run-lyrics.html>

Caedmon’s Call “Share the Well” (album “Share the Well”; genre world)

iTunes: <http://itunes.apple.com/gb/album/share-the-well/id253126956?i=253127013>

You Tube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vUHfRWJNvjM>

Lyrics: http://www.apos7le.com/list/song/3064/Caedmons_Call/Share_the_Well/

Songs for use on specifically on Day five

Church Hymnary Fourth Edition:

As the deer pants **CH4 550**

As the deer longs for running streams **CH4 33**

O God you are my God alone **CH4 43**

Will your anchor hold? **CH4 737**

How can I keep from singing **CH4 565**

Make me a channel of your peace **CH4 528**

Lord you have come to the seashore **CH4 523**

I heard the voice of Jesus say **CH4 540**

Spirit of God come dwell within me **CH4 722**

More Voices 55 Watch once more the windswept storm clouds (tune: Praise My Soul)

We Walk His Way: God of peace and justice [Wild Goose Resource Group](#)

We Walk His Way: Wash me in the water [Wild Goose Resource Group](#)

Rain Down



All who are thirsty (Brown and Robertson)

Come to the well full of water (Bernadette Farrell)

The Lord's My Shepherd (Stuart Townend version)

*These are ideas of specific hymns you might choose for this week's themes. However, for some excellent articles on church music and ideas for new music resources please check out our online music magazine **Different Voices**. To subscribe click [here](#). To see more information and see our free taster copy click [here](#).*

Additional Resources

A video on 'Why should we care about climate change?'

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bjwmrg__ZVw

Nurture in his Name is a short series from the Church of England and RCC.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zli73tMV-Do>

Prayers, sermons and other ideas for Creation Time are available at:

- Eco-congregation Scotland (ECS) module 2:
<http://uploads.ecocongregationscotland.org/uploads/m2.pdf>
- Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) <http://www.ctbi.org.uk/CJB/295>
- European Christian Environment Network (ECEN) <http://www.ecen.org/uploads/creationtimeliturgyo8.pdf>

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For further information regarding Climate Change issues and resources please contact the Church and Society Council through Adrian Shaw, Climate Change Officer, ashaw@cofscotland.org.uk

Visit the climate change pages of the Church of Scotland website:

http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/speak_out/care_for_the_earth

Become an eco-congregation. Find out more at :<http://www.ecocongregationscotland.org>

For further information about Starters for Sunday, please contact the Faith Expression Team through Anna Reid, Senior Administrator, areid@cofscotland.org.uk

Please note that the views expressed in these materials are those of the individual writer and not necessarily the official view of the Church of Scotland, which can be laid down only by the General Assembly.

