

# starters for Sunday

**Starters for Sunday October 14<sup>th</sup> 2012**

**Creation Time Resources Day 7**

**Rest, Replenish, Recycle**

By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. <sup>3</sup>Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done. ~ The Book of Genesis

[Genesis 2: 1 – 3.](#)

[Leviticus 25: 1 – 7.](#)

[Isaiah 55: 1 – 13.](#)

[Matthew 11: 25 – 30](#)



## Introduction to Theme



The theme adopted by the World Council of Churches for Creation Time 2012 is sustainable energy, reflecting the United Nations Year of Sustainable Energy for all. Energy is a theme running through all of creation: the energy of the big bang; the energy of the sun that sustains life on earth and the spiritual energy that sustains human faith. Without the constant renewal of these sources of energy we perish.

We have looked at each of the days of creation and now it is the seventh day; the day of rest. For some people the seventh day is a day of spiritual renewal through worship, for others a day of recreation in the garden or in the country; for others a day devoted to shopping or consumption and for some it is just another day of work. The restless pace of work and consumption has put at risk the idea of a day of rest and renewal.

‘Getting and spending we lay waste our powers’ the poet Wordsworth reminds us. Yet this is the logic of an economy that demands ever more of our time and resources and is indifferent to both humanity and the rest of creation. The economy allocates wealth according to our strength in the market, rewarding the strong and leaving the weak on the margins; it demands ever more resources from the earth to feed further growth and puts ever more waste greenhouse gases into the air, driving climate change.

Thus we put at risk creation in all its glory; one of the well springs of our spiritual energy and nourishment and if we lose touch with creation, if we worship only the economy, then we lose touch with God.



## Introduction To Passages

We live in strange times. Shopping, we are told, will help to get the UK economy back on track. We are all consumers now – and the argument is that the more we consume, the healthier our economy will become.

On the face of it, it sounds simple. But scratch just a little deeper and murky layers begin to appear.

For a start, obviously, there's the issue of proportion. What most of us in the North world consume, is way out of proportion to what masses of our neighbours in the South world can hardly even get their hands on most of the time. So while many of us struggle with obesity, many of them die of starvation.

Then there's the issue of content. Advertising urges us to consume luxury items “because we're worth it”, and bombards us with pictures of fast cars zipping along empty country roads – with no apparent sense of the irony that we don't actually need most of these cosmetic preparations, and even if we were able to buy one of these fast cars, all we would do would be simply to contribute to yet more traffic jams and air pollution.

And what about the issue of morality? Sure, trading keeps the world going round – but how do we as individual Christians in the rich North help to keep things fair and just in a manifestly unfair world trading system?

Here are a few thoughts from Scripture to help us reflect on this tricky matter.

### Genesis 2: 1 – 3

There it is in black and white – God rested on “the seventh day” of creation – took time off after all the immense amount of work he'd put in to the previous six days – so we should do the same. No work on Sundays.

### A couple of thoughts about this well-known passage.

I link it very much with chapter 5 of Deuteronomy, where Moses gives the Ten Commandments – and in verse 12, there comes the instruction to “remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy, as the Lord your God commanded you.” Many years ago, I read a book – whose name and author have long since left my memory – in which it was argued that one way to understand the Ten Commandments was to remember that they were actually a code of conduct for ex-slaves trying to work out how to live as free men and women. Taking this line, it is possible to see the commandment to do no work on the seventh day as an



exciting and radical new idea to a people who up till then had been forced to *work all the time, with never a day off*.

Free people do not work all the time. Free people have time off. Free people manage their time so that there is proper and proportionate consideration given to work, to leisure, to sleep, to conversation, to study, to exercise, and so forth. In our 21<sup>st</sup> Century society in the UK, my sense is that it is far too simplistic to simply say that there should be no work on Sundays. On the other hand, if as St. Paul says, “for freedom Christ has set us free” (Galatians 5:1), then are we not all required – employers and employees, governments and tax-payers – to seek such a balance, to refuse to “shop till we drop” or make others work their socks off so we can enjoy our leisure? It seems to me that this summons to true freedom lies behind all our efforts to legislate for trading hours and other similar matters. It's not an easy issue – and within it are all sorts of complicating factors, like the need to earn enough to maintain a decent standard of living, the issue of low wages ( the Scottish Campaign for a Living Wage estimates about 350,000 Scottish workers are paid less than the £7.20 an hour which is reckoned to be a living wage – [www.povertyalliance.org.uk](http://www.povertyalliance.org.uk) ), and so on - but as followers of the God revealed in Jesus, it's something we are surely required to struggle to address.

#### **Leviticus 25: 1 – 7**

How are we today to ensure that the land is given a decent rest every once in a while? Farmers do this all the time, of course, as part of the proper management of their fields – but what about the rest of us, who rely on the produce from these same fields?

One way, perhaps, is through recycling. On average, every person in the UK throws away their own body weight in rubbish every seven weeks; every UK household produces over one tonne of rubbish every year. ([www.uk-energy-saving.com/recycling\\_facts.html](http://www.uk-energy-saving.com/recycling_facts.html)). Recycling facilities vary hugely in our country – by far the best one we know is in the Ormeau Park in Belfast – but increasingly Local Authorities are making provision for this, and more and more households are taking it up.

As well as helping hugely to tackle climate change – recycling one glass bottle saves enough energy to power a colour TV for 15 minutes – is the separation and recycling of our rubbish, and the considerate use of things like energy-saving bulbs and so on, not one way of helping to give the land a rest, and so conserving the energy that is so badly needed for the whole of God's creation?



**Isaiah 55: 1 – 13**

I love this chapter! In the NRSV, its heading is “An Invitation to Abundant Life”, and it surely is! “Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price”, “eat what is good, and delight yourself in rich food” - these Jewish prophets were no moaning minnies, no hairshirted life-denying doom-sayers – they were all for a truly abundant life in all its materiality.

A friend returning home from working with the Church of South India once told me of how his Indian neighbours regarded food. They often didn't have very much of it, of course. But, my friend said, not only did they not complain; not only did they manage to live joyously with what little they had got; but whenever they heard of anyone who had abundant food, their attitude was to rejoice with that person, rather than to show any form of jealousy.

What does this chapter say to us, then? That we are to enjoy the prosperity that we have? Certainly. That we are to be conscious of when “enough is enough”, and not forget those for whom there is too little. Of Course. And if we look carefully at a couple of verses in this lovely chapter, are we not also to “Listen carefully” to the God who offers us this abundance (verse 2) and “incline our ear, and come” to that same God (verse 3) so that we may live?

But there is something else here as well.

Verses 6 and 7 issue a warning. “Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake their way, and the unrighteous their thoughts”.

Now here is a challenge to many in our society today.

I'm thinking particularly of the growing number of institutions which we are finding it increasingly difficult to trust. Politics; banking; the media; even sport; so many of these institutions nowadays come at us with question-marks hanging over them. We have to live in as complex society, unlike the simpler, rural one out of which our Scriptures came; so it is surely really important for us to keep on holding these important institutions to account, for they have a huge influence on our daily lives. This too is a task for Christians, as we seek to influence how the energy of our world is put to the best use for everyone in it.



**Matthew 11: 25 – 30**

One of the most stimulating experiences we had in recent years was to take part in the Poverty Truth Commission. This project began four years ago, in Glasgow, the brain-child of an elderly visiting American activist whose chief claim to fame was that he had once shared a prison-cell with Martin Luther King Jnr.! Through the Poverty Truth Commission, the real experts in poverty, people who lived in it, came together with some of the people who had power to shape society – media people, politicians, police, church-leaders, and so on – and they sat down and really listened to each other, and tried to work out how to change things – together. It is still going on, still making a difference.

I know – I'm sure you do too – many people who are “weary and heavy-laden.” Many of the folk in the Poverty Truth Commission, the people living in poverty but also some of the others too, were very weary indeed. Their burdens often sounded quite back-breaking – we were amazed at how bravely they carried them.

What does it mean for them to take Jesus' yoke upon them, and learn from him? I don't think that's a particularly religious phrase. Jesus' yoke was to be rejected and disbelieved – many of them had had that experience all their lives. But he bore it gently – not bitterly, not angrily, not cynically. For many of our friends in the Poverty Truth Commission, as they worked together to see how things could change, it was as they not only acknowledged each other's pain, but also listened to it carefully and gradually put aside bitterness and anger and cynicism, and started to see how “small steps could lead to big successes”, as one of them put it, that new possibilities began to open up.

“Heaven shall not wait  
for the poor to lose their patience,  
the scorned to smile, the despised to find a friend.

Jesus is Lord;  
he has championed the unwanted;  
in him injustice confronts its timely end.

Heaven shall not wait  
for the rich to share their fortunes,  
the proud to fall, the elite to tend the least;



Jesus is Lord;  
he has shown the master's privilege -  
to kneel and wash servants' feet before they feast.”

(Church Hymnary 4, No. 362, verses 1 and 2.)

***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.***

## **Prayers Poems and Responses**

### **Collect**

Almighty God  
In our baptism  
You adopted us for your own.  
Quicken your Spirit within us,  
That we, being renewed both in body and mind,  
May worship you in sincerity and truth  
And serve you with thankfulness of heart;  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
Who lives and reigns  
With you and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and forever.



## Call to Worship

Come Holy Spirit  
Inspire us

Come people of the earth  
We will worship together

You made the earth and the gifts of your creation  
We praise you God

For the smiles of your children and the beauty of your people  
We praise you God

For the chance to share with others  
And to celebrate your glory  
We praise you God

Litany for the Planet

Grasses multiply and wild flowers proliferate  
Because you God in Christ set the earth free

Vegetables colour the garden and herbs give aroma to the spiral  
Because you Spirit led us into the new creation

The lion and the lamb are making friends; the worms love the lettuce  
Because you Wisdom inspired new natural companions

The insects live in diverse croplands with birds sharing the spoils  
Because you Lord of Love taught us to share

Every part of the creation is significant from flies to mosquitoes  
Because you Creator of all, reasoned everything into being

Now teach us triune God to transcend ideology to sustainability  
Because Christ you are the peace between us





## Prayer for the Environment

Caring God,  
we thank you for your gifts in creation:

for our world,  
the heavens tell of your glory;

for our land, its beauty and its resources,  
for the rich heritage we enjoy.

We pray:

for those who make decisions about the resources of the earth,  
that we may use your gifts responsibly;

for those who work on the land and sea, and in industry,  
that they may enjoy the fruits of their labours  
and marvel at your creation;

for artists, scientists and visionaries,  
that through their work we may see creation afresh.

*Silence*

We thank you for giving us life;  
For all who enrich our experience.

We thank you that you have called us to celebrate your creation.  
Give us reverence for life in your world.

We thank you for your redeeming love;  
May your word and sacrament  
Strengthen us to love as you love us.

*Silence*

God, Creator, bring us new life.  
Jesus, Redeemer, renew us.  
Holy Spirit, strengthen and guide us.



## Blessing

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.

By Andrew Warmback and Brian Wilinson, [Network of Earthkeeping Christian Communities in South Africa](#), from World Council of Churches Time for Creation, 2010

The world is too much with us; late and soon,  
 Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers;  
 Little we see in Nature that is ours;  
 We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!  
 This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon,  
 The winds that will be howling at all hours,  
 And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers,  
 For this, for everything, we are out of tune.

From "The World Is Too Much with Us" William Wordsworth *Poems*, in two volumes (1807)

## Prayers of Intercession

Creator God, you have generously blessed us with an abundance of gifts in this, your world. Help us to share in that generosity by living in a way that ensures that your gifts will continue to be available for future generations.

O God, give us your love for the whole of Creation

Creator God, we rejoice that, as human beings, we have been created in your image and likeness. But we also recognise that humanity alone cannot adequately reflect you. The whole diversity of the earth is needed to give us even a glimpse of your wonder and greatness. Help us to live in a sustainable way so that this marvellous diversity is respected.

O God, give us your love for the whole of Creation

Creator God, we live in a world where some of us throw out food while others go to bed hungry; where some have the modern amenities of life at their disposal and others struggle



to find drinking water. May we learn to share with one another and, in this way, come to share in your generosity to all.

O God, give us your love for the whole of Creation

Creator God, the sun, the wind and the waves are your gifts for the flourishing of the whole community of life on earth. Help us to use them creatively to produce sustainable energy for all.

O God, give us your love for the whole of Creation

Through scientists, engineers and scholars new knowledge comes to light; may new developments in the production of sustainable energy protect our fragile planet and promote the well-being of all peoples and all creatures on their journey to wholeness.

O God, give us your love for the whole of Creation

We pray for the United Nations, for all international, national and local leaders and for managers of companies that they may be guided by your Spirit to make wise decisions about sources of sustainable energy for all.

O God, give us your love for the whole of Creation

Creator God, You have blessed humankind with understanding, imagination and memory. Show us how to learn from past mistakes and plan for the future creatively and responsibly.

O God, give us your love for the whole of Creation

*Leader*

Let us pray: Create in us a new heart and a new vision, O God, that the gifts of Your Spirit may work in us and renew the face of the earth. May we be one with you so that our work is yours and your work is ours. We ask this in the name of Jesus, who lives with you and with the Holy Spirit for ever.

Amen

**Prepared by Sister Catherine Brennan SSL and Sister Ann Concannon SSL, from Resources for Creation Time 2012, CTBI**



I arise today  
through a mighty strength,  
the invocation of the Trinity,  
through a belief in three-ness,  
through confession of the oneness  
of the Creator of Creation.

I arise today  
through the strength of heaven,  
light of sun,  
radiance of moon,  
splendour of fire,  
speed of lightning,  
swiftness of wind,  
depth of sea,  
stability of earth,  
firmness of rock.

I arise today  
through a mighty strength,  
the invocation of the Trinity,  
through a belief in the three-ness,  
through confession of the oneness  
of the Creator of Creation.

(St. Patrick)



## 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



Called by Earth and Sky page 1 PDF.pdf



Called by Earth and Sky page 2 PDF.pdf

Called by earth and sky – printed here with permission.

We Walk His Way	<b>Wild Goose Resource Group</b>
Know that God is good	<b>CH4 788</b>
The peace of the earth	<b>CH4 798</b>
God's love is for everybody	<b>CH4 765</b>
Mayenziwe –	
Your will be done on earth, O Lord	<b>CH4 805</b>
Lord your hands have formed this world	<b>CH4 140</b>
Here I am Lord	<b>CH4 251</b>
Enemy of Apathy	<b>CH4 593</b>
God's will for creation	<b>CH4 136</b>
Heaven shall not wait	<b>CH4 362</b>
Let all creation dance (alt. tune 60)	<b>CH4 149</b>

### Songs

You shall go out with joy	<b>CH4 804</b>
Come to me	<b>CH4 759</b>
Come and find the quiet centre	<b>CH4 716</b>



We lay our broken world  
He's got the whole world in his hands

CH4 721

*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](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bjwmrg__ZVw)

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

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

Many 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](mailto: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](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](mailto: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.

