

starters for Sunday

Resources for Creation Time Week 4: 'Sharing Water, Sharing Life'

22 September 2013 18th Sunday after Pentecost



Material for Creation time has been produced by a group coordinated by Rev Trevor Jamison, Environmental Chaplain, Eco Congregation Scotland. Our thanks to Emma Barber, Joanne Evans-Boiten, Trevor Jamison, Adrian Shaw and Chris Wigglesworth.

Further materials can be found on the Eco Congregation Scotland website [here](#).

Contents

Introduction to Sharing Water, Sharing Life	2
Jeremiah 8:18-9:1.....	5
Psalm 79: 1-9.....	5
1 Timothy 2:1-7	6
Luke 16: 1-13	7
Sermon Ideas	8
Prayers.....	10
Children's Address/Activity	14
Musical Suggestions	15
Additional Resources.....	17



Introduction to Sharing Water, Sharing Life

Eco-Congregation Scotland and the Church of Scotland have joined together to promote resources for worship for Creation Time 2013.

What is Creation time?

Creation Time started in the Orthodox Church in 1989 and has been supported by a growing number of churches across Europe since then. The European Christian Environmental Network has urged churches to adopt a Time for Creation stretching from 1 September to the feast of St Francis on 4 October. This was endorsed at the European Ecumenical Assembly in Sibiu, Romania in 2007, when it was agreed that Creation Time "be dedicated to prayer for the protection of Creation and the promotion of sustainable lifestyles that reverse our contribution to climate change". It was adopted by the Church of Scotland at the General Assembly in 2011. You can find out more [here](#).

United Nations International Year of Water Cooperation

2013 is the United Nations International Year of Water Cooperation. This has been adopted as the theme for Creation Time 2013.

The objective of this International Year is to raise awareness about water co-operation, and about the challenges of water management around the world. This a huge challenge in a world of rapidly growing population, urban growth and climate change. You can find out more about the UN International Year of Water Cooperation [here](#).

Why is Water Sharing of Importance to Churches?

Water is essential to life and without water we could not live. The Bible repeatedly reminds us of the importance of caring for creation and water is part of this story. In the first verse of Genesis water exists before land and the seas are created on the third day. Water is part of the bounty of creation. In Leviticus 26:4 we hear that God 'will give you your rains in their season, and the land shall yield its increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit.' In Psalm 72:6 'May he be like rain that falls on the mown grass, like showers that water the earth!'



Water can also be destructive and when it comes in floods devastation follows. (Genesis 7, 20-23) ‘The waters rose and covered the mountains to a depth of more than fifteen cubits. Every living thing that moved on land perished—birds, livestock, wild animals, all the creatures that swarm over the earth, and all mankind. Everything on dry land that had the breath of life in its nostrils died. Every living thing on the face of the earth was wiped out; people and animals and the creatures that move along the ground and the birds were wiped from the earth. Only Noah was left, and those with him in the ark.’ Water then has potential as both a blessing and a threat to human life.

Water Conflicts

Jesus was baptised in the River Jordan, a recognition of the spiritual significance of the river as well as its practical importance for life. Yet the same River Jordan today is a source of division and discord. According to Friends of the Earth, Middle East ‘The Jordan River is unique in its natural and cultural wealth, but is threatened by excessive water diversion and pollution, treated as a backyard dumping ground’. The river is heavily used for human purposes and its flow is greatly reduced, and because of this and the high evaporation rate of the Dead Sea, the sea is shrinking. All the shallow waters of the southern end of the sea have been drained in modern times and are now salt flats. Disputes around the use of this river’s water have involved communities, countries and peoples and remain a potent source of division. Sadly, disputes over water are not unique to the River Jordan. You can find out more [here](#).

Water as a Human Right

In 2010, through Resolution 64/292, the United Nations General Assembly explicitly recognised the human right to water and sanitation. The Resolution calls upon States and international organisations to provide safe, clean, accessible and affordable drinking water and sanitation for all.

This ambition is far from realised according to the United Nations 2.5 billion people in the world do not have access to adequate sanitation, almost two fifths of the world's population. You can find out more [here](#).



For all these reasons, spiritual and practical, water co-operation and water sharing is a theme of global importance. We invite you to reflect on the lectionary bible messages, with attention to the opportunities and challenges provided by this perspective, and also to use the worship material and accompanying links to further information and resources.



Readings

[Jeremiah 8:18-9:1](#)

In this passage there seem to be three voices speaking. Firstly, Jeremiah, is in anguish over the people's plight, pleading with God on their behalf to end their suffering. Secondly, there is that of the people of Israel who complain God seems absent, their harvest has failed and that therefore an extremely hard winter awaits them. Then there is the voice of God who is angry because the Israelites have moved away from him by following other gods.

Jeremiah suffers the pain of the people of Israel, but at the same time he suffers the pain of God at the lack of his people's faith and obedience.

In the Bible suffering, especially communal suffering, is usually understood to be caused by being estranged from God through living lives of unrighteousness and injustice. The obvious solution to the pain therefore, would be to change practices and so find the way back to God. But the Israelites seem to be paralysed fearing that God has totally given up on them.

Therefore Jeremiah expresses his despair and longing to be the mediator who brings healing and peace.

Healing and peace could be brought through water. On the one hand Jeremiah has a vision of healing and peace, bringing water to soak the fields and make abundant growth possible, feeding the people who are now hungry. On the other hand he has a vision of the water of tears; the tears of repentance brought before God, the tears of hope that bring healing and new life.

[Psalm 79: 1-9](#)

This Psalm is a lament too. The suffering community is expressing their pain not regarding a failed harvest this time, but about the destruction of Jerusalem and God's temple.

Other Psalms express similar situations but this Psalm focuses on the pain and the sin that is understood by the Psalmist representing the community as a whole, to be at the root of all the destruction.



This is an extremely graphic Psalm, with very clear descriptions of the suffering that is experienced at the time of the calamity; bodies eaten by birds, human flesh attacked by wild animals, blood poured in such quantities that it flows like water. And so many people dying that burying them is impossible...

This is too much suffering and the people can't cope with it anymore and ask to be forgiven, surely they have suffered enough for their own and their ancestors sins.

Through this heartfelt request they acknowledge that they believe there is hope, somehow they know that God will listen to them and forgive them, that God will return to them and live again among them. Healing and new life will be offered because they have repented. The question is not whether but when. This hope is indeed expressed tentatively in the last verse of our passage but later in verse 13 the confidence in God's forgiveness is fully acknowledged.

Lamenting, expressing ones pain can be cathartic and a first step towards healing, just as repentance can have the effect of purifying us and giving us new life.

[1 Timothy 2:1-7](#)

This passage would make a good starting point for a closer look at the way we pray. For prayer is much more than a list of petitions for ourselves and those who belong to us.

It is interesting that the author of this letter encourages his readers to pray for everyone including those in positions of power, including the Roman oppressors. For we pray for people not because we like them or trust them but because God wants to save all people.

Prayer is not about getting what we want and not just about personal concerns. Prayer is about making God's kingdom come on earth, which includes how the earth's resources, water amongst them, are used and shared.

Praying, according to the author, is not just to the benefit of those we pray for but also to our own as it will bring us peace and allow us to worship God freely and live godly lives.



God saved humanity through his son Jesus Christ who paid the price for our sins, if we realise this our lives are changed and our prayer life will focus on that loved being shared with all.

Along with prayers of intercession we have to include prayers of thanksgiving; showing our gratefulness for God's salvation of humanity through Jesus Christ. In the communal prayers of worship we should also include prayers praising God for who he is, and of course prayers of confession that bring us healing and offer us new life.

Through prayer we are united not only with God but with all fellow human beings who are all loved by God without exception. This knowledge brings with it a responsibility as Christians to love and care for all as well as to share with all in a just and fair way.

[Luke 16: 1-13](#)

Here is one of Jesus' disturbing parables! It includes the famous assertion: "you cannot serve God and Mammon". Today's parable is not easy to understand. Here are three possible approaches:

- Focusing our lives towards the future helps to bring forth the kingdom of God
- Despite the fact that the world only looks at the outcome, you cannot bring good through bad. This approach would contradict the words of the master in the parable but link in well with the last three verses of our passage, opposing as it were, the children of light to the children of this age. Seen from this point of view the steward tries to avoid suffering through dishonest means. The question remains; does this work in the end?
- Another possibility is to interpret this passage as an instruction to forgive; wherever you are, whatever you do, forgive, just as God forgives you always.

From whichever angle we prefer to interpret the parable, we are all, like the steward, faced with choices in our lives. And how we choose to live has repercussions for the people around us, for the people that come after us, but most of all for the kingdom of God.

The steward looked at the resources he had and used them as best he could to his own benefit. What are our resources (including access to or control of water) and how do we use them? Do we use them to the glory of God and for the benefit of others or simply for our own benefit?



Sermon Ideas

Water is often thought of as life giving because we all need to drink water, just as water, in order to survive. In Scotland we are in the happy position of having water on tap – think how many taps there are in your house alone! Less directly, but essentially, access to a water supply is essential for the growth of the crops that sustain us.

Today, we ponder that water is also vital for healing. We only need to think of the water used to clean wounds, of a wet face cloth on a hot feverish brow, of sore feet cooling down in a pool of fresh water. There are also the “watery” tears, shed out of pain and sorrow, tears that in themselves are part of the healing process. So today we look at water, tears and healing as part of our preparation for the coming of the Kingdom of God.

Both readings from Jeremiah and Psalms are lamentations, lamentations from God and/or the prophet and lamentations from a community (Psalm 79), expressing pain and distress with, albeit tiny glimmers of hope. Yet lamenting in itself can be the beginning of healing, for as long as we lament we believe deep down that there is a possibility of change. As long as we cry there is a possibility of consolation.

Jeremiah cries vicariously for his people (9: 1), potentially bringing some sort of healing through his love. Jesus wept over Jerusalem and his tears were accompanied by actions – his teachings and acts of power - culminating in his life-giving suffering and sacrifice.

In prayer our cries and tears for the human situation are expressed, both individually and as congregations. In the Bible, suffering, and particularly communal suffering, is often linked to sin, or rather to being separated from God. So prayers as described in 1 Timothy 2:1-7, prayers of different types, prayed with different groups in mind, have an essential role in the process of healing and life-giving forgiveness. Indirectly, such prayers then hope for a future for those who come after us.



It is this future our Gospel reading is concerned about. However else we interpret this challenging parable, it reminds us that life is not just about today but about tomorrow. Our task in preparing for the kingdom of God is urgent and should be the only thing that matters in our lives. Adequate preparation for that kingdom requires of us, among other things, to look at our resources, asking if we use them appropriately, for healing and health of others who are part of God's creation.



Prayers

Prayer of praise and thanksgiving

Great God, your love pours down upon us;
Water from the skies as rainfall,
Water flowing along the fish-filled rivers,
Ocean waters, traversed by trawler and luxury liner alike.

We praise and thank you for these gifts.

Great God, your loves pours out for us;
Water from our drinking taps,
Water from our showers,
Well and aquifer, supplying means for us to live and grow.

We praise and thank you for these gifts.

Great God, your love pours through us;
Tears of joy, responding to the life of those we love,
Tears of sadness, to mark and cope with life's difficulties,
Tears of anger, moving us to fight injustice.

We praise and thank you for these gifts.

O God, who worked upon the waters of creation;
O God, present in your Son, baptised in the River Jordan,
Pour out your Spirit upon us, now, we pray,
As we worship you today.

Amen



Prayer of Confession

Help us, O God of our salvation,

For the glory of your name;

Deliver us and forgive us our sins,

For your name's sake. (Psalm 79: 9)

You have called us to be your Church, loving you and loving our neighbours,

Yet we have ignored you, concerned with 'church' and not the world outside.

Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of your name;

Deliver us and forgive us our sins, for your name's sake.

You have called the nations of the world to be righteous, peaceful and just,

Yet our world is disfigured by self-centredness, violence and injustice.

Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of your name;

Deliver us and forgive us our sins, for your name's sake.

You have called us and those closest to us to share and support one another,

Yet our own concerns come both first and last, brushing aside the needs of others.

Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of your name;

Deliver us and forgive us our sins, for your name's sake.

Amen.



Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession

I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings be made for everyone, for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity. (1 Timothy 2: 1-2)

Lord, give us a wide ranging vision for the health and healing of your creation.

Make us take heed of what goes on far away from us.

And help us to focus on the things that are close to hand.

Hear us, as we pray for health and healing in places where water is dirty and good sanitation is lacking. We pray especially for that tenth of the world's population who do not have access to safe water. We pray for those thousands of children who every day will die from diseases linked with unsafe water.

Also, even as we give thanks for the safe water that we enjoy, we pray for those who work to gather, treat and transport our water to us. Make them diligent in their work and make us grateful for this blessing in our lives

Lord in your mercy

Hear our prayer

Lord, give us a wide ranging vision for the health and healing of your creation.

Help us to discern what goes on the highest echelons of the nations

And may we never be blind to the situation of those brought low in our land

Hear us, as we pray for those in authority; leaders in government, business and helping organisations. Inspire those who make policies that affect access to water. Envision those whose decisions affect how much water is used in making the food that we eat.



Also, even as we give thanks for our own good fortune, hear us as we pray for those in our land for whom the costs of buying food and drink is a daily worry, requiring careful calculation.

Lord in your mercy

Hear our prayer

Lord, give us a wide ranging vision for the health and healing of your creation.

Help us to look beyond the self-interest of humankind

And encourage us to see that your love is for all of your creation

Hear us, as we pray for the good treatment of our fellow creatures and good practice in the ways in which food is brought to the human table. Today we pray particularly for the flourishing of creatures that inhabit the seas and the oceans, the rivers and the lakes of this world.

And deepen our sense of community that we can see with new eyes that part of creation that neither speaks nor breathes yet even now displays your greatness.

Lord in your mercy

Hear our prayer

O Lord, you call us to peaceable, godly, dignified lives.

Hear our prayers for everyone and everything in your creation,

In Jesus' name.

Amen



Children's Address/Activity

You might choose to use the 'water cube' activity, available through the CTBI worship resources for CreationTime, exploring how much water is used in the production of the different foods we eat <http://www.ctbi.org.uk/653>



Musical Suggestions

These touch upon themes of creation, including some with explicit references to water

CH4 28	Thy mercy Lord (Psalm 36)
CH4 136	God's will for creation
CH4 140	Lord, your hands have formed this world
CH4 147	All creatures of our God and king
CH4 151	All you works of God
CH4 238	Lord, bring the day to pass
CH4 240	God in such love for us lent us this plant
CH4 243	Touch the earth lightly, use the earth gently
CH4 244	Where are the voices for the earth?
CH4 245	It's a world of sunshine, a world of rain
CH4 250	Sent by the Lord am I
CH4 525	Have you heard the raindrops drumming on the rooftops?
CH4 540	I heard the voice of Jesus say
CH4 722	Spirit of God, come dwell within me

22 September

CH4 7	How long, O lord?
CH4 120	God, we praise you, God we bless you
CH4 125	Let's sing to the Lord, yes, sing a new song
CH4 168	God weeps at love withheld, at strength misused
CH4 175	Praise, I will praise you with all my heart
CH4 264	Judge eternal, throned in splendour



CH4 468	Son of God, eternal Saviour
CH4 469	Restore, O Lord, the honour of your name
CH4 482	Come, let us to the Lord our God
CH4 686	How happy are all they who hear true Wisdom's guiding voice
CH4 706	For the healing of the nations
CH4 718	We cannot measure how you heal
CH4 721	We lay our broken world in sorrow at your feet
CH4 722	Spirit of God come dwell within me



Additional Resources

Prayer Resources

These materials are designed to be a starting point for what you might look for in Prayers. You may also be interested in looking at our publication **Pray Now 2013**. Please click [here](#).



Music Resources



The hymns mentioned in this material 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](#) and can be found [here](#).

Preaching Resources



Starters for Sunday 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.

Scots Worship Resources

The Church's Scots Language in Worship Group produces a [wide range of worship resources](#) in Scots language, which include reflections, poems, prayers, songs and drama.



The Mission and Discipleship Council would like to express its thanks to Eco-Congregation Scotland who have supplied these materials.

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.

