

starters for Sunday

Resources for Creation Time Week 2: 'Sharing Water, Sharing Life'

8 September 2013

16th 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 18:1-11	5
Psalm 1	5
Luke 14:25-33	6
Sermon Ideas	7
Prayers.....	8
Children's Address: An all-age reflection on Water	13
Musical Suggestions	15
Additional Resources.....	17



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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 cooperation, 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. 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 recognized 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 18:1-11](#)

The prophet is sent to learn by watching the potter, who can take an item that has spoiled in the process and rework it to his or her satisfaction. Then a disturbing word comes about God's wise and sovereign purposes for a community. Even a nation can be plucked up, broken and destroyed, as a potter might do with the clay, before all things are made well and take on their proper shape.

All things can be made well, but the people have a part to play in making things so or in choosing a direction that leads to destruction. (vv. 8-10) The people of God, the "house of Israel"- Judah and Jerusalem at this time - was in danger of losing its purpose. Instead of doing what they wanted, they had to listen to the voice of the Lord, saying, 'turn now, all of you from your evil way, and amend your ways and your doings' ... or else. The people were now in a situation where a change of direction was urgent.

[Psalm 1](#)

Two ways are offered in the psalm which opens up this collection. True happiness for humankind lies not in following the advice of the wicked or the paths of sinners (v. 1) but by on-going meditation upon and responding to the 'law of the Lord.' (v. 2)

Those who take the better way are pictured as 'trees planted by streams of water'; note water as source of the good, righteous life, fruitful and healthy. (v. 3) In contrast, the image of the 'the wicked' is of dry chaff blown about the landscape.

Once again, we are presented with choices about behaviour which bring consequences for them and for others.



[Luke 14:25-33](#)

As with Jeremiah and the Psalmist, so now Jesus confronts those who listen to him with choices that affect their actions and future life.

Jesus is followed by large crowds but by turning around and speaking to them he dares them to pause and think. Using exaggeration (hyperbole) and verbal sketches, he challenges them to count the cost first if they want to learn with him how to live in God's way. Life following Jesus will be costly, like taking up a condemned person's cross, so best to calculate the cost, like a building project or even a war, before setting out on the way with him.

Think longer term than today, says Jesus. Are you ready to let go of your possessions when that is needed? You have to think ahead and make choices personally, all of you, as you follow me.



Sermon Ideas

Many choices are made without much conscious thought; to stop at the red light (or not). There are however, situations where we need to stop (and not just at red lights) and consider making changes. On occasion respond to an explicit question, requiring some thought: ‘What do you want for dinner?’, ‘Which way will you vote in a referendum?’, or ‘What does it mean to follow Jesus today?’

We cannot just assume that as Christians in Scotland (or any other nation) we are all right, simply because we are Christian and/or Scottish. Wise choices concerning using and sharing water, our theme during this Creation Time, may involve a change of direction, given a greater priority in our lives. Even if a community has plentiful drinking water taking that for granted is foolish; failure to reflect may lead to a nasty shock further down the line. How do we judge the role of water in generating power or growing crops, or what will we do about places where access to water is not easy, or even dangerous? You can out more [here](#).

In all three readings we are urged to give explicit thought to our setting as nation and as a community who follows Jesus. After all, we are here today, in part at least, because, in one way or another, we are trying to follow Jesus – as a congregation and individuals.

Jesus, Jeremiah and the Psalmist ask us to make conscious choices. In Jeremiah’s time the setting was the threat of invasion and national destruction. In the Gospel reading it is being part of a crowd following Jesus. An important aspect of our context is living in a time of climate change in which access to and use of water becomes a pressing issue, requiring forward planning (Luke 14: 28-32)

Following Jesus means having to make real choices. Living as a community of God’s people, and living as part of the wider human community, the choices we all make need to be made in the light of God’s purposes. The way Jesus invited other to follow (at a cost) includes loving our neighbours, so making right choices leads to abundant life, for ourselves, and for others (Psalm 1: 1-2) and our belief in salvation involves exactly that.



Prayers

Prayer of praise and adoration

I praise you that I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works (Psalm 139: 14)

Wonderful are your works, O God, the works of your creation.

We look out as far as we can see

With the naked eye

With the lens of telescope and binocular

With the technology of radio wave and searching satellite,

And we are lost in wonder, love and praise.

We look in as far as we can see

With the naked eye

With magnifying glass and microscope

With the technology of MRI and Hadron Collider

And we are lost in wonder, love and praise.

Wonderful is your work, O God, coming to us in Jesus Christ

We look for him, as far as faith allows

In Gospel stories of parables and power

In the witness of apostle and disciple

In his suffering, death and resurrection,

And we are lost in wonder, love and praise.



Wonderful is your work, O God, present with us through your Holy Spirit

We look to see you in tongues of flame at Pentecost

We hear of you when Jesus says, 'Receive the Holy Spirit'

We meet with you, alive in both Church and world today

And in this meeting with you

We are lost in wonder, love and praise;

For you, O God, Creator, Saviour and Spirit.

Amen

Prayer of Confession (can be done effectively with two voices)

O lord, you have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away. (Psalm 139: 1-2)

You have searched me and known me ...

O Lord, we confess those things in our lives we would never want others to know

We ask for your forgiveness.

You know when I sit down and when I rise up...

O Lord, we confess the actions we should have not taken and the times when we have avoided taking the right action.

We ask for your forgiveness.



You discern my thoughts from far away...

O Lord, we confess the times when our thoughts have been

unkind,

unjust,

inappropriate

We ask for your forgiveness.

O Lord, who knows us better than we know ourselves, yet who loves us, help us to know your forgiveness in every part of our lives.

Amen

Prayers of Intercession

Your eyes beheld my unformed substance. In your book were written all the days that were formed for me, when none of them as yet existed. (Psalm 139: 16)

O God, you were there before creation;

Through your love creation came into being,

Through your generosity we are a part of it,

Through your wisdom creation will find its end.

Today, we pray for your creation and our place within it.

Lord of our past, our present and our future

Hear our prayer



O God, you watch over the nations of the world

You know our history

You know our current situation

You are ready to guide us into the future

Today we pray for the nations of the world

Lord of our past, our present and our future

Hear our prayer

O God, through your Son, Jesus, your Church came into being

You call us to live as your people

You call us to love one another

You call us to love the world.

Today, we pray to grow in love for each other and for the world.

Lord of our past, our present and our future

Hear our prayer

O God, you give us the gift of community.

Communities have come into being and have a history,

Communities live their life in the here and now

Communities have a future life.

Today we pray for communities to be enlivened by love and justice.

Lord of our past, our present and our future

Hear our prayer



O God, from you come family and friends.

They bring us the wisdom of former generations,

They support us in the ups and downs of today's life,

And in the younger generations we see hope for the future.

Today we pray to be attentive to the wisdom of the older, to share generously with our own generation, and to be supportive to those follow on after us.

Lord of our past, our present and our future

Hear our prayer

O God, “your eyes beheld my unformed substance. In your book were written all the days that were formed for me, when none of them as yet existed”. (Psalm 139: 16)

Hear our prayers for the things that you see within us – our hopes, our worries, our plans – as we remember our pasts, ponder our present, and contemplate our future

Silence

Lord of our past, our present and our future

Hear our prayer

Amen



Children's Address: An all-age reflection on Water

[**PREPARATION:** Have a large clean glass of water in a prominent place – the communion table, perhaps, with a spotlight if possible; hidden at hand a similar-sized dirty glass half-full of muddy water, with some insect remains or rubbish in; you could also have a bucket of water concealed near the front, if you use **{*{ below]**

Let people quietly look at the water in the clear glass

“Anybody, what does it make you think of?”

“What are the good things about water?”

“Are there any bad things?” – do not spend too long joking!

{*{ time and inclination allowing— “have you ever tried to carry a large bucket of water? -

“what’s the important thing about it? [persist until someone says it’s HEAVY!

Ask a mother –“what does that make you think of?” – hopefully someone will mention village women carrying water, first thing in the day often ... **}*}**

“What do you like to drink when you are thirsty on a warm day?”

“Do you think water is better? ... the best?”

“Why is water so good for us?”

{reach down and produce the muddy water ... }

“What does this make you think of?”

“Would you like to drink it?”



“Why ever not?”

“Does anybody have to drink water like this?”

“Which of these two do you think God wants people to drink?”

“So how should we pray now? ...”



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

8 September

CH4 96	You are before me. God, you are behind (Psalm 139)
CH4 97	O God, you search me and you know me (Psalm 139)
CH4 210	Awake, my soul, and with the sun
CH4 213	Every new morning God gives us freely
CH4 252	As a fire is meant for burning
CH4 258	When the hungry who have nothing



CH4 402	'Take up your cross', the Saviour said
CH4 501	Take this moment, sign and space
CH4 502	Take my life, Lord, let it be
CH4 506	All I once held dear, built my life upon
CH4 509	Jesus calls us! O'er the tumult
CH4 510	Jesus calls us here to meet him
CH4 533	Will you come and follow me
CH4 534	Make me a captive, Lord, and then I shall be free
CH4 535	Who would true valour see, let him come hither
CH4 537	We do not hope to ease our minds
CH4 539	I want Jesus to walk with me
CH4 573	Jesus, Saviour, Lord, now to you I fly



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.



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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.

