

# Eco-Congregation Scotland

## Creation Time Resources 2017: Journeying with God



---

### INTRODUCTION

---

Worship material for Creation Time 2017 comes from an ecumenical writing group, with contributors from the Church of Scotland, the Roman Catholic Church, The Salvation Army and Scottish Episcopal Church. It follows the theme “Journeying with God”, linking to the UN international year of sustainable tourism for development. It explores God’s invitation to join us in the journey of faith leading us into care for all creation.

Readings from the Gospel of Matthew are emphasised, which appear in the Revised Common Lectionary in September.

---

### THE MATERIAL

---

Week One	03/09/17	Pilgrimage: God’s invitation to get moving (Matthew 16: 21-28)
Week Two	10/09/17	Guide for the journey: God’s commandments (Matthew 18: 15-20)
Week Three	17/09/17	God’s companionship on the journey (Matthew 18: 21-35)
Week Four	24/09/17	Food for the journey: God’s provision (Matthew 20: 1-16)

---

### THE WRITING GROUP

---

Members of the Creation Time 2017 Writing Group:

Jenny Adams is Church of Scotland minister of Duffus, Spynie & Hopeman Parish, in Moray, in the north-east of Scotland. As part of an Eco-congregation, and through many other connections, she is trying, failing, and keeping trying to live out creation care and concern for social justice in all of life.

Basil Clark is the Parish Priest of Our Lady of Loretto and St Michael Catholic Church, in Musselburgh, East Lothian, a new Eco-congregation. As a former Anglican Franciscan and one time director of the Rock Trust he has an ongoing interest in justice, peace and environmental issues.

[www.ecocongregationscotland.org/creationtime](http://www.ecocongregationscotland.org/creationtime)

Published by Eco-Congregation Scotland  
Registered Charity SC041287

# Eco-Congregation Scotland

## Creation Time Resources 2017: Journeying with God



Richard Murray is a Lay Reader in the Scottish Episcopal Church and a member of its Church in Society Committee, where he has a focus on environmental issues. He is a board member of Eco-Congregation Scotland.

Callum and Emma Newton are lieutenants in the Stornoway corps of the Salvation Army. The sheer beauty of the island on which they live make them appreciate and strive harder to do all they can to appreciate and protect God's creation. They are the first Salvation Army corps to become an eco-congregation.

Editor: Miriam McHardy is a freelance writer and editor, with a particular interest in the area of faith, justice and the environment. As part of a relatively new eco-congregation she is particularly interested in exploring how faith and spirituality can support our care for our planet.

---

### ABOUT 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".

---

### ALSO AVAILABLE

---

Resources for World Day of Prayer for Care of Creation - September 1st 2017

In 2015 Pope Francis established September 1st as the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, encouraging the Catholic community around the world to pray for our common home. Now, for its third year, the aid agency, CAFOD, provides a prayer in union with creation at:

<http://cafod.org.uk/content/download/25371/182321/version/5/file/A%20Christian%20prayer%20in%20union%20with%20creation-%20Laudato%20Si!.pdf>

And resources for organising a prayer vigil at:

[www.ecocongregationscotland.org/creationtime](http://www.ecocongregationscotland.org/creationtime)

Published by Eco-Congregation Scotland  
Registered Charity SC041287

## Eco-Congregation Scotland

### Creation Time Resources 2017: Journeying with God



<http://cafod.org.uk/content/download/29948/340910/version/7/file/Prayer%20vigil%20for%20the%20care%20of%20creation.pdf>

The Columban Missionaries also offer a range of resources at:

<http://www.columbans.co.uk/creation-time/>

---

## CREATION TIME 2017 - WEEK 2 - SEPTEMBER 10TH

---

“GUIDE FOR THE JOURNEY: GOD’S COMMANDMENTS”

---

---

THOUGHTS ON THE READINGS

---

EXODUS 12:1-14

---

God is about to create something new out of the chaos of Israel’s life of slavery under Pharaoh and the community is commanded to mark the occasion and remember this saving event for the future. This festival, to become known as the Passover, will require liturgical reenactment each Spring and remain a central ritual in Judaism; while Christians remember from the Synoptic Gospels that Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper at a Passover celebration. The detailed Passover instructions covering the use of the food and blood of the lamb emphasise equal distribution so that no single member of the community will be deprived of the opportunity to participate. Dramatic tension is added by the urgency of being clothed and ready for the journey. Nothing is to be wasted and any unusable fragments of the meal to be destroyed.

[www.ecocongregationscotland.org/creationtime](http://www.ecocongregationscotland.org/creationtime)

Published by Eco-Congregation Scotland  
Registered Charity SC041287

# Eco-Congregation Scotland

## Creation Time Resources 2017: Journeying with God



In the meantime, God will carry out a final assault against Pharaoh and the Egyptians and exercise judgements on their 'gods' from whom the oppressive empire derives its authority. This act of liberation represents a continuation of the covenant between God and the Israelites and the mark of the blood of the lamb on their gateposts will be a public sign of their salvation. The Jewish people will literally be "passed over".

The desert would be a proving ground for Israel and became associated with God's self-revelation. God would humble and test them, for their own ultimate good, in order to discover the depth of their obedience, as well as offering them a set of guidelines for a good life, with God and the whole of creation.

---

### PSALM 149

---

This short song of praise is a celebration of the Lord's sovereignty over the world. The reference to a 'new song' suggests a new orientation, perhaps drawing from the exodus, the formation of Israel as a people, tasked with implementing God's sovereignty throughout the whole world. The focus seems to be just on Israel, so the psalm lacks inclusive concerns. Israel's experience however, would have been sharpened by the historical realism that the nation faced in its constant struggle against its hostile neighbours.

To a contemporary audience, the best we can draw from this is that we all have to share in the working out of God's justice and righteousness and renew our allegiance to God. Without God by our side our efforts to work for God's kingdom will be in vain. In obedience to our commander-in-chief, we move through our earthly pilgrimage with strength and hope.

In essence therefore, the song of praise is a call to action in the world. It falls within a group of final psalms that celebrate how God creates a new way of living: sets the prisoners free, watches over the strangers, widows and orphans, gathers in the outcasts, the broken-hearted and the downtrodden, while casting the wicked to the ground.

The fullness of life, captured in story, ritual and song, rooted in the Judeo-Christian past, serves to remind us of the history of human salvation. It teaches us too, of the inspiration that others felt when they responded to God's call, wholeheartedly and in joy.



---

### ROMANS 13.8 -14

---

This passage comprises two Pauline exhortations, the first about love fulfilling the law, and the second imperative about living by the rising sun. The force of Paul's words comes across in the 'debt' reference "owe no one anything" except the obligation to love; a debt that can never be settled. The purpose of the law, known as the Torah or Mosaic law, recorded in the first five books of Hebrew scripture, was to be a guide to the people of Israel of how to live as a Godly community: caring for each other and loving God, so bringing God's light into the world. Jesus sums up the law and the prophets within two commands, love God and love your neighbour (Matthew 22:37-40; and similar in John 13:34-35), and Paul affirms the ethical obligation by providing a helpful understanding for his listeners.

Since Christians are a resurrection people Paul places these obligations in a time context of the new age that has dawned in the Easter story, but making clear that the day of fulfilment is yet to come. He contrasts this age and the new age, using figuratively the opposites of darkness and light, night and day. Paul stipulates that our preparedness for this new age is symbolised by the outward clothing displaying allegiance to Christ, with the inner spiritual commitment to self-sacrificial service. To Paul and his people time was the essence, and contemporary listeners may wish to reflect on whether we have become complacent that our journey towards the great future moment is simply a steady progress.

---

### MATTHEW 18:15-20

---

This passage has a long pre-history in Judaism,

You shall not hate in your heart anyone of your kin; you shall reprove your neighbour, or you will incur guilt yourself. You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbour as yourself: I am the Lord. (Leviticus 19.17-18, NRSV).

And following Deuteronomic Law concerning witnesses,

A single witness shall not suffice to convict a person of any crime or wrongdoing in connection with any offence that may be committed. Only on the evidence of two or three witnesses shall a charge be sustained." (Deuteronomy 19.15, NRSV).

These rules for maintaining community integrity, if it comes under threat from a recalcitrant member, also ensure that the member causing the friction is not treated unfairly. In the fledgling nation of Israel and the emerging Christian community it's hardly surprising that such law and jurisprudence were necessary when there would have been much discussion, heated at times, with brothers and sisters threatening to tear God's people apart. The rules are stringent, but the process is workable since the intention is to bring conflict into the open if it cannot be resolved, rather than allow matters to be swept under the carpet, or continue to fester. Widening the circle of auditors is just as much a

## Eco-Congregation Scotland

### Creation Time Resources 2017: Journeying with God



risk for the complainant who may be exposed as the true troublemaker, as it is a strengthening of the case against the one accused.

Significantly, Jesus introduces a new dimension to this process and calls attention to it by the familiar use of 'Amen'. Wherever two or three gather, there God dwells. The area of conflict is sacred ground and God is present, and listening. If the member refuses to listen to the whole assembly of the faithful, then and only then is the member to be treated "as a Gentile and a tax collector." Yet this is hugely ironic coming from Jesus, perhaps deliberately so, since he never regarded a Gentile or tax collector as someone who was beyond the reach of God's mercy. A community with God present needs to be one that is always seeking to restore the lost. It is significant that this teaching about the confluence of community and power is bracketed by the parable of the lost sheep, and the debate with Peter about the quantitative measure of forgiveness.

# Eco-Congregation Scotland

## Creation Time Resources 2017: Journeying with God



### SERMON THOUGHTS

---

There is a sense of urgency in God's call to the Israelites to get ready for a new life. Their lives had been ingrained by slavery, the only way of life that they knew. The instruction to eat the Passover meal with staff in hand and loins girded was a call to get ready for the move to freedom. The Israelites were offered the 'carrot', "For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land" (Deuteronomy 8.7, NRSV), but also the stick, "Take care that you do not forget the Lord your God, by failing to keep his commandments, his ordinances, and his statutes, which I am commanding you today." (ibid v.11) In the wilderness journey this proves to be a struggle, until God removes the tension by declaring himself to be the God of mercy whose glory is to give, as much as it is to dole out punishment.

The backdrop to modern life is sometimes represented as a form of slavery, with the cult of busyness and the pursuit of Gross Domestic Product playing out the drama of human existence. Environmental catastrophe, issues of global justice and ethnic tensions springing from competition over scarce resources, poignantly afflict the poorest in our human society. How do we respond to these challenges in our moral economy? How can we equip ourselves for the journey?

The destination is a pilgrimage of faith and hope to a promised land 'beyond the Jordan'. It is neither a recognisable place nor are we certain of the route so we are filled with fear about giving up our comfortable lifestyles for a wilderness sojourn. In our imagination we suffer hunger and thirst, with wild animals lurking in the bushes and unfriendly neighbours ready to attack. We protest that the costs of the journey are to be borne now, while the benefits will not be felt in our time.

Yet we can learn from history how the children of Israel changed from a bickering group of refugees into a nation. Today we have troublesome members of our community who question the causes of climate change; contrarians dismiss environmental commitments as 'red tape' undermining jobs and competitiveness; while, at the other end of the moral spectrum, 'deep ecologists' shout loudly about unsustainable growth, global capitalism and the false dawn of geo-engineered solutions.

So how is such divergence of opinion to be resolved, and a practical outworking of sacrificial living to be found? We are seemingly trapped in the rigidity of our politics, economics, and social organisation. If we fail to learn from history we shall be doomed to repeat it. It is only the realisation that all aspects of our well-being - physical, emotional, spiritual, social, economic, political, ecological - come together under God, and that, if we follow Jesus commandments to love God and our neighbour, we will get our focus right. But we have to move quickly. "The night is far gone, the day is near."

# Eco-Congregation Scotland

## Creation Time Resources 2017: Journeying with God



### ALL – AGE ADDRESS

---

Depending on the age of the audience ask:

Has there ever been a time when they have seen or heard someone doing something wrong in their family or community?

It might be something directed at them e.g. a brother or sister hitting them, or taking something from them,

Or out in the community it might be someone vandalising something, stealing in a shop, or treating someone badly.

How did they feel when it happened, and what did they do about it?

Did they talk to the person who was behaving badly, or did they tell someone else? Did they get someone to help them talk to the person?

Did they find it difficult? What happened next?

**Alternatively**, encourage some of the children to act out a scene when someone behaves badly towards another in their family.

Encourage them to think about how the people involved felt, and what helped to make things better.

- In today's readings we are reminded that we are all part of God's family, a community. We have a responsibility for one another because we are called to love one another and to help one another in our journey of faith.
- That means sometimes having to be brave and remind people of what it means to be fully part of God's family. That might mean calling someone out when they behave badly to a person, or if their behaviour affects the wider community. It means challenging their behaviour and encouraging them to make different choices.
- That includes thinking about how we care for our world, and pointing out when our behaviour is very bad for the environment and the whole of God's creation.
- It might mean pointing out when people drop litter, or tear up plants. Or get them to think about what they are buying or whether they really need to buy new things just to be in fashion, e.g a new phone or tablet or the latest toy.
- When we are older it can also mean challenging our government if it is doing things that make climate change worse, or questioning the way big companies behave that affects the environment and the lives of other people all over the world.

[www.ecocongregationscotland.org/creationtime](http://www.ecocongregationscotland.org/creationtime)

Published by Eco-Congregation Scotland  
Registered Charity SC041287



# Eco-Congregation Scotland

## Creation Time Resources 2017: Journeying with God



- Jesus reminds us that we don't have to do it alone. We can work with others from our church communities and other churches, who also believe that we need to care for God's creation and to speak out when it is being damaged. And of course when we work together and ask for help, God will always be with us.

---

### MUSICAL SUGGESTIONS

---

#### *Hymn Books used*

Church Hymnary 4 (CH4)	Hymns Old and New (HON)
The Song Book of the Salvation Army (SB)	Singing the Faith (StF)
Hymns Ancient & Modern: New Standard Edition (AMNS)	Common Ground (CG)

#### **Hymns for this week**

A new commandment	HON4	StF242		
Awake, Awake, fling off the night	AMNS342	HON56		
Forgive our sins as we forgive	AMNS362	CH4 486	HON199	StF423
Jesus calls us here to meet him	CG66	CH4 510	HON378	StF28
Jesus, friend of little children	SB654			
O praise ye the Lord	AMNS203	HON574	SB385	
Seek ye first	CH4 641	HON652	SB675	StF254
Send me Lord	CH4 800	StF782		
Yes, I'll sing the wondrous story	HON340	SB855	StF323	

[www.ecocongregationscotland.org/creationtime](http://www.ecocongregationscotland.org/creationtime)

Published by Eco-Congregation Scotland  
Registered Charity SC041287

# Eco-Congregation Scotland

## Creation Time Resources 2017: Journeying with God



---

### PRAYERS

---

---

#### PRAYER OF APPROACH

---

Blessed are those who have walked the way of your commandments;

may we be ready to follow your Way.

Nourish us in our study of your Word,

refresh us at the bottomless well of your love.

When we stumble on the rough pathways

and lose our sense of direction in the wilderness,

may we sense the surprise of your steadying hand

helping us to reach the promised land.

Then we shall sing the pilgrim song of triumph

Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

**Blessed be God for ever.**

---

#### THANKSGIVING

---

We give you thanks for your everlasting love:

You remain our constant companion,

share in our hopes and dreams,

console us when we are in trouble,

and are ever ready to help us when our strength fails.

[www.ecocongregationscotland.org/creationtime](http://www.ecocongregationscotland.org/creationtime)

Published by Eco-Congregation Scotland  
Registered Charity SC041287

# Eco-Congregation Scotland

## Creation Time Resources 2017: Journeying with God



We remain in your constant debt,  
an obligation that can never be settled,  
to love you and our neighbour and care for your creation.  
Even when we forget you, lost in feelings of self-sufficiency,  
your Spirit calls us and restores us to your side.

We give thanks for your forgiveness,  
when we have gone stray.  
May it inspire us to a new way of living  
when we might join with you  
in singing a new song.

**Amen**

---

### CONFESSION

---

Lord Jesus, for words and actions we regret, for the hurt we have caused:  
Restore what we have broken.

**Lord, have mercy**

Lord Jesus, for rejection of our neighbour, for communities in conflict:  
Forgive us for ignoring the wonder of your healing presence.

**Christ, have mercy**

Lord Jesus, for those who suffer hunger, for the homeless and oppressed:  
Help us to reach out in loving service.

**Lord, have mercy**

[www.ecocongregationscotland.org/creationtime](http://www.ecocongregationscotland.org/creationtime)

Published by Eco-Congregation Scotland  
Registered Charity SC041287

# Eco-Congregation Scotland

## Creation Time Resources 2017: Journeying with God



---

### PRAYERS OF INTERCESSIONS

---

Sovereign Lord,

strengthen us in our witness in our journey towards you;

expand our horizons beyond material possessions and physical comfort;

and gather us in to a new community which cherishes your Creation.

#### **Hear the prayers of your pilgrims on the Way**

Loving God,

you have made us into a family of faith;

call us as we set out on our journey away from what is familiar,

and guide your faithful pilgrims towards our heavenly homeland.

#### **Hear the prayers of your pilgrims on the Way**

Healing Spirit,

breathe into our homes and communities;

quell the heated arguments that mar our lives,

and bring us to the consolation of all things in Christ.

#### **Hear the prayers of your pilgrims on the Way**

Companion Lord,

as we take up our cross to follow your faithful Son,

who is the beginning and end of our journey,

Instil in our hearts obedience to that call.

#### **Hear the prayers of your pilgrims on the Way**

[www.ecocongregationscotland.org/creationtime](http://www.ecocongregationscotland.org/creationtime)

Published by Eco-Congregation Scotland  
Registered Charity SC041287